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THE KINGDOM OF ALL-ISRAEL:

*ITS HISTORY, LITERATURE,  
AND WORSHIP.*

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THE  
KINGDOM OF ALL-ISRAEL:

*ITS HISTORY, LITERATURE,  
AND WORSHIP.*

BY  
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1883.



## PREFACE.

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to tell in our English tongue a story that was told well-nigh three thousand years ago in a language, which has long ceased to be a living language on the earth. It is the story of the kingdom of All-Israel, as the Hebrew empire was called in its most flourishing days. Small though that kingdom was, its annals have always been regarded as a heritage of mankind, fraught with welfare to the whole world.

The writings which contain this history are frequently described as not altogether worthy of credit. While they contain much that is undeniably ancient, they are also believed to contain much that is comparatively recent. The original books are said to have been curtailed of parts which are now lost beyond recovery; and parts are alleged to have been added which can only be ascertained by skilful inquirers and the application of most delicate tests. Evidently, then, it is the duty of a historian either to vindicate the reality of the history, or to separate the wheat of truth from the chaff of romance. The proofs of authenticity are so numerous and so convincing, that I have accepted the history, as it is read in the Hebrew, notwithstanding undoubted difficulties in the narrative.

Of the skill and industry shown by several authors, who, after careful inquiry into words and things, have undertaken to distinguish the true from the false in the history, no one can speak without respect. But the value of their researches is to be measured, less by the theories they have proposed, than by the necessity, under which they have laid those who differ from them, of examining every difficulty that had formerly been passed by or lightly esteemed.

The rules of historical research, on which I have worked, are those which have been applied in verifying the literature of Greece and Rome. Two of them were first stated in a

book written eighteen hundred years ago to vindicate the truth of the Hebrew records. Josephus, a learned Jewish priest, was the author of that book; and the position he maintained was the necessity of public documents for an accurate history of any nation. This involved, first, a knowledge of the art of writing, and second, the drawing up and the safe keeping of state papers. He also claimed for his countrymen specially, and for the East generally, the honour of handing down from remotest antiquity documents which had been faithfully written and kept by national officials. On the value of his two tests of a true history there has long been universal agreement among men. But on the antiquity of writing and of state or family papers there was a wide divergence of opinion till, within the last half century, the revelations of science compelled the same general acquiescence in the views first published by Josephus.

Besides these two great principles, science recognises a third, which gives life and coherence to all literature. Every nation has a fountainhead of thought, from which a living stream flows into the darkest corners of its history. Homer's poems are such a fountainhead; Shakespeare is another; the Pentateuch is a third. If, then, the Pentateuch be the chief source of Hebrew literature, living rills will be found running from it throughout the after history in words, in quotations, and in ideas. I have endeavoured to discover these streams and threads of life, and to trace them back to the one fountainhead. Fuerst's Concordance was an indispensable help in the work; but the omissions in that book, few though they be, sometimes occur where the oversights, if undetected, would have weakened my argument.

Another rule, which cannot be too strongly insisted on, is to use professional words in the sense attached to them in the legal or historical books of a nation. Both Josephus and Philo recognised its importance for the literature of their people, by the care which they took to expound the twofold



meaning of the legal word 'sacrifice.' Had modern writers attended to their teaching, much useless discussion might have been avoided.

No history or biography can be trusted, if the author disregards these four rules. And a book of annals, in which all four are observed, gives its readers the best guarantee of historical accuracy. Such a record is the book of Samuel. But an observance of these rules by a historian cannot remove every bit of ruggedness from a reader's path. On the contrary, an ancient book in which unvarying smoothness distinguishes the narrative, will always be regarded with suspicion. A brief record of remote antiquity, which contains no difficulty in fact or in law, may be a record from which all difficulties have been skilfully and designedly removed: 'An English judge once remarked on hearing minutely circumstantial evidence, that when a lock works too smoothly, there is reason to believe it has been oiled.'

I have had recourse to footnotes only where they seemed necessary for elucidating the meaning or showing the agreement of the past with the present. I have also avoided using Hebrew and Greek words; for an English reader, who wishes to master the deepest secrets of the history, can do so without difficulty in his own tongue. And I have generally adhered to our English translation, though sometimes changes had to be made on it, especially in passages, which a fuller study of the original has proved to have been erroneously rendered.

The chronology of the history is still in a state of uncertainty. At present we can only be said to be groping after accuracy. Something similar is true of the length of the Hebrew cubit, and of Hebrew weights and measures generally.

The Old Testament referred to, in estimating the number of pages in any of the books, is Hahn's (Van der Hooght) large type edition, containing 1392 pages.

EDINBURGH, *February* 1883.



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ELECTION OF A KING.

(1 SAM. viii. 1-x. 27, xii.)

THE history and the legislation of the Hebrew race are of an unusual character. They are not like any other history or any other legislation. From the beginning the national records, regarded as pieces of literature only, bear a stamp of their own. In the great conflict with the Egyptian king, at the outset of the history, only two actors can be said to appear upon the stage. But there are, besides, an overseer and a chorus. The overseer is one who, to use the words of the greatest of Greek poets, 'sees and hears all things from above.' The chorus is a trembling nation, cowering beneath the task-master's rod, and sending up its bitter cry to the umpire in heaven. Never were the ancient rules of Greek tragedy more singularly observed; they were followed ages before that tragedy was born. There are two actors, and two only. Never are more than two speakers introduced on the world's stage. But the chorus, that is, the whole Hebrew people, pass their remarks on what is said and done; feel the weight of decisions come to; and, while they are the prize of war, they enjoy as victors and suffer as vanquished in the drama. Two men, and two only, stand out before a wondering world, each armed with immense power. One of them wields the might of the empire of Egypt, with its vast resources in men and material of war; the other is an aged sage, without armies at his back,

without outward show, saving the support of a brother more aged than himself; but he is gifted with unequalled powers of word and thought, and utters a name which all nature obeys. The majesty of man, in its grandest form, meets in conflict with the majesty of heaven, embodied in two feeble old men. The text of the great story is the ultimate triumph of right over wrong. A down-trodden nation is the spoil of battle between the opposing forces.

It is not usual to write history on these principles and in this way. With all truth it may be said never to have been done save in this one instance, and by authors of the same race, who followed the example thus set. Were it not a record of facts, it would be called a tragedy on the model of the great dramas written in Athens a thousand years later. It is not a history like the work of Livy or Tacitus, like the books of Herodotus or Thucydides. These writers delight to describe the crossing and recrossing of the threads of human life, the play of intrigue amongst men, the working of human passions, the march of movements in a state. But the triumph of right over wrong, gradually reached by a long course of events in which wrong has often the better in the conflict, was not before these authors' minds as the great theme of their writing. When the march of events hurled a sinner from his pride of place, and brought a good man to well-earned honour, they were surprised by the results; but the tracing of these results in human life was not their first and their chief aim. With them the actors are ever shifting, the scenes are always changing, the stage is full of living things, which distract the eye even while they impress the imagination. In the Hebrew story the plot is managed differently. From the outset the triumph of right is kept steadily in view. Although the actors are but two in number, the interest never flags, the living things on the stage are nameless but active, speechless but full of language. This is history of a different kind from any other which the world knows of. Each of the two

speakers is surrounded with servants waiting on his word ; but not a name is given to draw a bystander's eye off the chief figures on the stage. Motives are analyzed with marvellous power ; but no one can say that imputations are undeservedly thrown on king or people, or unworthiness attributed without reason. To keep firm hold of what he has unjustly seized is the principle acted on by the king of Egypt. It is a common failing with men in all ages and in all ranks. But this failing is lifted up to its loftiest height in the history. A whole nation is the prize won by the king ; cities built, temples beautified, strongholds fortified, canals dug, without cost to him or labour to his own people, are the gains he has made and is determined to increase. The greatness of an empire, the easing of his own subjects, are the wish and purpose of the king. Injustice and violence seem gilded over with the brightest hues of nobleness when he puts forward as pleas for them, as he may be supposed to have done, the refuge his country has been to those fugitives, and the welfare of his own warlike subjects. If wrong could ever be turned into right, a case could have been made out for it in this plea. But the great Overseer above looks down on the violence that is done. He is not deceived by fair seeming. He hears the cry of the enslaved. And in one man's breast He plants the resolve to break their fetters, to lead them forth from bondage, to make them the central figure for all time in the history of men. A tragedy so grand, ending as it does in so fearful an overthrow of armed power, leaves no room for fiction. The very plainness of the facts surpasses imagination. To describe the tragedy as a kernel of fact, overgrown with brilliant products of human fancy, is to attribute to man's mind a power of invention which it has never possessed, and has never approached since. Nor can the conception and working out of scenes the most impressive known in history be attributed to two thinkers, living in different ages and writing independently of each other. One mind is

seen at work in the thinking, one hand in the writing out of the narrative.

Only once again is a similar tragedy enacted. And again the speakers are few in number, the motives clear, and the doom terrible. It is the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with the vindication of Aaron's appointment to the priesthood. Although it reads less like a Greek tragedy than the story of the exodus, and more like a piece of ordinary historical writing, it is different in conception and expression from the historical works of other men. If it is not a plain statement of facts, it is useless to call it a fiction in whole or in part. Wishing to be thought a recorder of facts, the writer of it is discovered recounting falsehoods more glaring than a storyteller would dream of inserting in a romance. The solemnity of the matter, the weight of majesty in the few words spoken, and the awfulness of the end, lift it out of the region of fancy, and leave us no choice but to class it with fact or with falsehood. The story is expressly referred to in the book of Deuteronomy, it is hinted at in Samuel; the sin of the men in claiming and exercising the special right of priests to burn incense to Jehovah, is carefully avoided by that prophet all through his actions, and is repeatedly condemned in the books of the Kings as the source of national ruin. The aspirations of these wilderness rebels give an unmistakeable colour to the subsequent history. That colour was imparted by the story of their doom, as a source colours the stream to which it gives birth.

The history in the book of Samuel is written on the same plan as that of the exodus from Egypt. Whoever wrote the former (about 980 B.C.) must have breathed in the spirit of the latter, till he thought as it thought, and regarded the world as it did. Two actors or speakers, and a suffering or a rejoicing chorus, appear on earth; an umpire looks down from heaven, awarding praise or blame, reward or punishment. Although the scenes are continually shifting, the general plan remains

the same throughout. Israel is the chorus, which passes its comments on the deeds done, which suffers or rejoices as events fall out. Jehovah is the unseen umpire, whose goings it is sometimes hard to follow in the darkness, but whose doings always reveal a power making for righteousness among men. At the opening of the history Eli and Samuel are the speakers named. As the action proceeds, Samuel and Saul stand forth before the world. When the scene next changes, David is the upholder of the right; Saul is the doer of the wrong. While one befriends, the other troubles the people. But again the scene is changed. David is the troubler and wrong-doer; Absalom, himself most unworthy, is the avenger of the wrong. The story in Samuel ends without punishment befalling the guilty captain, who had heaped up unrighteousness against himself for a generation, the great soldier, Joab. But the same plan of writing history pervades the first eleven chapters in the book of the Kings. Solomon at first maintains and represents the cause of right; Joab meets his doom by Solomon's command. A history, so singularly written, carries proof of unity of authorship on its face. While it differs largely from the history and the legislation in the Pentateuch, the plan leaves no doubt of the writer's indebtedness to that book. His words and ideas echo its words and ideas with unmistakeable clearness. While he has a way of his own in thinking and writing, he is seen borrowing from an older master with the teachableness of a loving disciple. He is always thinking of one who has gone before him in the historical field; whose pattern he follows, whose words he treasures, and to whose master hand he gives himself up for guidance in the tangled ways of life.

That the history and the legislation have experienced the fate of all other books in doubts and darkness gathering round them, as men became farther removed from the age that gave them birth, is quite true. When the little things of life, the hinges, as it were, on which events often turn,

are forgotten by failure of narrators or lapse of time, the events of any history may seem to a later age as if they were out of keeping with what else is known; and some one might even deny their reality altogether. Or an author, in revising a large work, might alter a word or two in one part, without observing or without thinking it necessary to observe that, in so doing, he was leaving a few words elsewhere hanging like loose threads. A critic, seeing the bad joining, might pounce upon it as a proof of a different hand having tried to improve what a master worker had left unfinished. But true criticism is most unwilling to resort to these shifts of the weak. A slight change in the way of looking at historical events may cause as much confusion to the mind, as the throwing of a telescope out of focus causes to the eye. The point from which we regard an arrangement of affairs made many centuries ago, may be quite different from the point occupied by the people who were the actors. An apparent rent in the armour of any author may thus arise from other causes than bad workmanship. We know, for example, that ancient writers sold their works with erasures made by themselves. These erasures were held to be proof of genuineness.<sup>1</sup> But from them various readings were certain to result, when copyists came to think the author's first thought better than his second. A book once written was also sometimes revised and continued by the author, who might not trouble himself to remove from the early part of the work matter which makes it look to us as if it were out of joint with the middle or the conclusion. This was done by Thucydides, the grandest of Greek historians. Even in that most careful writer, notwithstanding the editing his book received, it is sometimes impossible to determine his exact meaning, clear though that may have been to himself and his contemporaries. In one place it was debated whether he means the *north* or the *south* side of a narrow sea.<sup>2</sup> But men dispute in these cases without

<sup>1</sup> Martial, vii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Grote, iv. 330.



losing temper or sense. They want to know the meaning of the author; they never think of denying that he wrote the book. A different atmosphere is breathed as soon as we pass from classical to sacred criticism. An editor's work, however slight, is magnified into proof that the original author never wrote the book, perhaps never had a being; a difficulty about the meaning of a single word, whether it denotes the *east* or *west* of Jordan, has become a reason for denying the antiquity and authorship of a whole treatise. A line of argument so narrow does not deserve to be dignified with the name of science. At least, it is advisable to bear in mind that classical criticism preceded sacred, and that the former discovered the rules which the latter has followed. Had the same narrowness of view which disfigures sacred criticism, which delights in breaking whole books into miserable fragments, and which exalts every little peculiarity of an author into a ground for denying his authorship, continued to prevail in classical criticism as it once did, the history of mankind would now be in a state of incredible confusion. But the way of doubting everything in Latin and Greek spent itself, with the result of leaving things much as it found them. The upshot of the sifting to which Hebrew literature has been subjected will be the same.

According to those recent writers who handle the Hebrew writings with perhaps more freedom than would be allowed them in discussing any other documents, there is an order of merit among the historical books which requires to be carefully observed in criticism. While they assign the first place for reliableness and antiquity to the books of Judges and Samuel (980 B.C.), they regard with somewhat less respect the two books of the Kings, compiled about 560 B.C. There are traces, clear and manifold, of an influence in the latter which they believe to be largely wanting in the former. The influence discovered running through these books is usually the law code known to

us as the book of Deuteronomy. The writer of the Kings had that law-book in his hands, referred to it, and allowed it to tinge his history of the past. By many critics the real writer or compiler of Samuel is believed not to have known of its existence, to have paid no respect to its enactments, and to have given proof that the book could not then have been in writing. But the Prophet Samuel and his contemporaries, not less than the writers who followed them, knew this book, quoted from it, and regarded it as all generations have regarded it—an heirloom of the Hebrew race handed down to them from remotest antiquity. The history in Samuel is unintelligible, if the book of Deuteronomy was not from the first a household book in Hebrew homes.

Several recent critics among ourselves, following the leading of the most advanced section of Continental scholars, have adopted these views of the historical books of Samuel and the Kings. They have gone farther in their dealings with the two books of Chronicles. Their view of that work is copied, like almost every rule they apply in criticism, from their predecessors in the field of classical inquiry. There is no originality in their method or their ideas. So true is this that we shall give their judgment on the books of Chronicles in the words of an English writer, describing the kind of history which became popular in Rome in the first century of our era: 'The historian of the Flavian era (80 A.D.) is no longer a chronicler or a romancer. He may seek, perhaps, to mould the truth to his own prejudices; but he is not a mere artist indifferent to truth altogether. He is a philosopher, and recognises a mission. He has his own theories of society and politics; the events of the period before him group themselves in his mind in certain natural combinations, according to the leading idea to which they are subordinated. If he is a man of imagination, he paints the world from the type impressed on his own organs of vision. Whether or not the facts be correctly represented, they are at least true to him.

He describes what he sees, or really fancies that he sees. Works that bear this stamp of imagination are immortal. Their details may be inexact; the genius by which they are produced may be uncritical; but their general effect is strong and vivid, and they leave a mark behind them which cannot be effaced.<sup>1</sup> These words of Merivale describe the view now frequently taken of the Hebrew books of Chronicles. He is writing about Latin works composed four or five centuries later; but his words bring before a reader the judgment passed by critics on the books of Chronicles, with a vividness which nothing in their writings can be said to approach. Justice requires us ever to bear in mind that so-called sacred criticism is, frequently, only a pale reflection of the brilliant results of classical inquiry. But in denying its originality, we must not be supposed thereby to deny its worth, or the truth of its legitimate results. Porson's rule holds good: in criticism as in war nothing should be despised. To the books of Chronicles, then, it is said, the lowest place among Hebrew historical writings must be assigned. Using Merivale's words, we may call the author a man of imagination, who paints the Hebrew world, previous to his time, as if it had been always the same as he found it in his own day. The facts depicted were true to him—that is, he believed them to be true, but they were not correctly represented. He had one 'leading idea'—the distinction between priests and Levites; and to that idea everything in history was made subordinate. We may call him an artist, if we like, or an unconscious romancer, but he is not a recorder of facts. Such, then, is the view taken of his history. As he gives the critic great trouble, he must be put out of the way. To brand him as a forger would grate on a reader's feelings; he may be more safely set aside as a simpleton and a romancer, a man whose attempts at historical writing may cause a smile, but who is on no account to be trusted. But before this

<sup>1</sup> Merivale, *The Romans under the Empire*, viii. §3.

can be allowed, proof must be furnished, and no satisfactory proof is forthcoming.

There is a marked difference between the object regarded by the author of the Kings in writing his history, and that regarded by the Chronicler. While the latter is a writer of church history, the former is a politician, recording the fortunes of the people generally. Great as is the difference between these kinds of historians among ourselves, it was as great among the Hebrews. Whoever puts the books of Kings and the Maccabees on one side, with Chronicles on the other, will feel, on passing from the former to the latter, the same change of atmosphere which we feel on passing from the civil to the church history of a country. Everything wears another look, because we are regarding the world from a new point of view and through a different medium. Events, which seemed fully detailed in the civil history of a country, appear only half recorded when we turn to its church history. From the nature of things it cannot be otherwise. But this change of handling is a change which many writers forget to recognise as imparting a justifiably different colour to the story of Israel in the pages of the Chronicler, when we compare his book with that of the Kings.

Twelve generations of Hebrews had lived and died since their fathers overran the Promised Land. Battles had been gained and lost by them; sieges had been undertaken and borne; kings had trampled their nation in the dust, and had themselves been hurled from the highest seats. But when a balance of gains and losses is struck, it is unquestionable that the Hebrew race had sunk below the heights of freedom and greatness which it reached under Moses and Joshua. During these twelve generations of war and peace,—war from which they won no lasting good, peace which they allowed to slip away unimproved,—they were held together as one people by bonds so loose that their princes and chiefs came to regard the existing constitution of the country as a failure. A common

faith did not seem to them a strong enough bond of union for the twelve cantons. In times of great excitement it might, and it often did weld the scattered tribes into a strong, an almost irresistible whole. But it lost its power the moment that excitement began to cool. Petty quarrels and local jealousies repeatedly snapped this bond of union. The high priest, though the head of the nation's faith, was not the head of its political life, and could not control the coldness or disputes which weakened the tribes, and exposed them an easy prey to less powerful neighbours. A common high priest, a common sanctuary, a common faith, and common yearly festivals, admirably adapted as they were to bind the separate cantons of Israel firmly together, failed in their object. The people lost faith in God as their king; they also lost faith in themselves as His subjects. On loss of faith followed loss of unity and freedom. This loss of faith, with the idolatry that followed, was their rejection of Jehovah.

A political head seemed as necessary as a common faith to give thorough unity to the life and work of the nation. But this the Hebrews could not be said to possess. A regular succession of judges, as the presidents or chiefs of the country were called, was unknown to the political constitution of Palestine. When danger threatened the tribes, or when a foreign power had planted its foot on the prostrate commonwealth, a bold and active leader, inspired by Heaven or by the fire of his own patriotism, vindicated the freedom of his country. But this fitful leadership did not meet the wants of the Hebrews. No sooner had the skilful steersman, who piloted the ship of the state through its perils, quitted the helm, than the billows again swept her head towards the rocks. For generations the country had been drifting nearer to reefs and shoals, pilot who succeeded pilot doing gradually less to gain for it the safety of a harbour. The work of Othniel, the first judge, in delivering his countrymen from bondage, was far easier than that of Samuel, the last; the task of saving the

state from shipwreck in the former case was not difficult; in the latter it had become a desperate effort to avert an almost inevitable disaster. So impressed were the chiefs of the twelve tribes with their nearness to ruin in the days of Samuel, that, after discussing among themselves the dangers of the commonwealth, they urged him as their only hope of safety to set a king over the land. They had some reason to turn to this way of escape. So far as we are aware, the judge had neither the right nor the means to enforce authority; the people followed him because the welfare of every man among them required obedience to be rendered, not because they dared not disobey his commands. Approaching dangers brought them round the judge, just as the presence of beasts of prey makes sheep gather in under the eye of the shepherd and his dogs. But as soon as the danger passed, the judge seems to have been abandoned by his followers. His work was finished; the people could guide themselves. This temporary banding together of the Hebrews did not satisfy the chiefs. With some justice they considered it one cause of the nation's weakness. When they asked a king from Samuel, they asked him to make a great change in the constitution of the country. The free will of the people evidently required to be regulated by the authority of a head, for only a resolute chief could compel the members of the nation to united action. Not unnaturally the old man felt the putting forward of this plan to be a disguised censure on his own administration. In vain did they assure him of their respect and esteem. He regarded their prayer as a personal affront; in reality it was the clutching of a drowning nation at a plank of safety left untried. Samuel resisted, entreated, warned, reproached in turns; but in vain. There was a cloud gathering beyond Jordan, which threatened to sweep the Hebrews from the lands their fathers conquered. Princes of tribes, elders of cities, all saw it coming. It was spreading its gloom over their councils, and compelling them to action. That cloud was a horde of eastern plunderers

led by Nahash, king of Ammon. A storm of war equally black was lowering on the land from the west. The brave and well-armed Cherethites, the Philistines or wanderers, were threatening the freedom of the southern tribes, if, indeed, they had not planted their iron heel on the Hebrews' necks. Their garrisons held strongholds in the most mountainous districts; and the roads throughout Palestine, in the neighbourhood of these fortresses, were not safe. Between the dead pressure of the triumphant Philistine and the threatening attitude of the Ammonite, the Hebrew commonwealth was breaking up into fragments, whose only chance of continuing knit together seemed to lie in acknowledging the authority of a common visible head. The chief men, reading the signs of the times, united in demanding a king from the great prophet of the nation. Samuel condemned the movement, but the voice of the people was against him, and the voice of Heaven commanded him to yield to their wishes.

When the arrangements for the worship and government of the Hebrews were completed in the wilderness three or four centuries before the age of Samuel, the distinction between the political and the spiritual chief of the nation was clearly drawn. And before they crossed the Jordan to conquer Western Palestine, the unity of the nation, the necessity of maintaining it at all hazards, and the appointment of a successor to their aged political head, were insisted on, and fully provided for by divine revelation. Moses regarded the wish of Reuben and Gad to settle on the east of Jordan as an attempt to break up the unity of the nation. Nor did he grant their request till satisfied that it was reasonable, and till full guarantees were given for the discharge of their obligations to the rest of the tribes. Feeling the approach of death, he arranged also for a leader to take his place, who might be expected to complete the work he had begun. What Moses had been as king of the nation, Joshua in a great measure became after his death. Steps were thus taken at the very outset of the

history to maintain the unity of the Hebrew people, and to give effect to it by concentrating authority in the person of one political head. But the law of the land provided still further for strengthening these bonds of union. A man so far-seeing as Moses, and so well acquainted with the science of governing, knew that twelve tribes, located each in its own district and held together by no political ties, might soon become twelve commonwealths, forming alliances and waging wars with one another. He therefore left them directions to choose a king for themselves, without determining whom they should choose, or when the choice should be made. This, then, was the oldest political constitution of the Hebrews, national unity under one visible head. It was gradually departed from after Joshua's death. For centuries another constitution, largely a growth of circumstances, or rather of an unhappy letting things alone, had taken its place. Men of the highest ability, like Samuel, had come to believe that this secondary growth was the best constitution for the land. Repeated disasters had failed to show them their mistake. And when men of less ability discovered it, and demanded what was really the Mosaic arrangement, they were regarded as unwisely meddling with what Heaven had sanctioned. Samuel and his friends were no more justified in their view of affairs than those who insisted on a change. Among the Hebrews a secondary political growth was regarded as the oldest constitution of things. This need not cause surprise. It has frequently taken place among the most enlightened nations of Europe. With them, as with Israel, the cry has oftener than once been raised, Return to the original constitution of the nation. At the same time the chief men, wishing to be like their neighbours, were guilty of rejecting Jehovah as the safest centre for political unity as well as national faith.

There was at that time residing in the land of Gibeah, one of the districts of Benjamin, a man named Kish. That he was a person of wealth and standing is not said ; but he may have



been both, for he had several servants or slaves. His son Saul is described as 'a choice young man and a goodly, and there was not a man of the sons of Israel goodlier than he; from his shoulder and upward he was higher than any of the people.' But this tall and goodly youth did not bear among his friends and neighbours a character equal to the beauty of his personal appearance.

The incident which introduces Saul to notice was one of common occurrence in a country where boundary stones formed the marches of estates, and the fields were all unfenced. His father's asses, straying in a body from their pastures, could not be found in the neighbourhood. They were she-asses, animals far too valuable to be lost without a thorough search being made for them. They were as highly esteemed by ancient Hebrews as is the horse by modern Arabs. In the hilly and rugged regions of Palestine, sureness of foot and docility rendered them of the highest value for riding on, and for the carriage of grain and goods. These hardy animals were also so easily kept as to be invaluable to Hebrew yeomen. Saul, accompanied by one of the servants, was despatched in search of the lost asses. Taking three days' provisions in their srips, they journeyed first into Mount Ephraim; then they passed through the districts known as Shalisha or 'Thirds,' and Shaalim or 'Foxes,' which was probably in the Danite country of Shaalvim, inquiring for the asses at the people they met on the road. Turning southward and eastward they next came to the Land of Zuph, a district which took its name from Zuph, a Levite and an ancestor of Samuel. The chief town of this district was not in the land of Benjamin (1 Sam. ix. 16). It was situated on two heights. Probably the houses clustered on the top of one of them, while the other and loftier was reserved as a high place for the worship of God, and a college for training sons or disciples of the prophets. Naiioth, 'Dwellings,' or Naiioth-on-Ramah, 'Dwellings on a Height,' may have been the name of the former;

Bamah, or 'High Place,' the name of the latter. An altar for priestly sacrifice is not mentioned in the story, but a dining-room, in which was held the feast that usually followed a sacrifice, whether priestly or popular, crowned the crest of the Bamah.

On approaching the town, which, from its position, would be visible at a considerable distance, Saul proposed to his servant to return home, although only three days had elapsed since they set out. The country seems to have been unsettled and the roads dangerous. Kish, as his son apprehended, had become more alarmed for the youth's safety than he was grieved for the loss of the asses. But the servant, who had got some hints from the people they met on the road, proposed to enter the town before them, and ask counsel of a man of God, who happened to be then dwelling there. 'Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.'<sup>1</sup> It is evident that the servant had an indifferent knowledge of this honoured 'man of God.' However, Saul was not unwilling to go. But he drew back at first, because they had not with them a present for the prophet. 'What shall we take to the man?' he asked: 'The bread is spent in our vessels, and there is no present to take to the man of God.' But the servant showed by his looks that Saul was mistaken. Scarcely were these words uttered than, suddenly changing his tone, Saul asked, on seeing the servant's look, 'What have we?' A silver quarter-shekel was all the money he had: this he proposed to give to the man of God

<sup>1</sup> This ignorance of Saul and his servant is easily illustrated from history. Take, as a well-known example, the fight at Cramond Bridge, near Edinburgh, between James v., king of Scotland, and the masterful beggars, whose cudgels nearly got the better of the king's sword. James's helper at the crisis of the fight, though an intelligent farmer, living not five miles from Holyrood Palace, appears to have been entirely ignorant of his person. Even when the man he helped on Cramond Bridge met him in the presence-chamber at Holyrood, he could only conclude, from both of them keeping their hats on, that either that man or himself was the king of Scotland.

to declare to them what they should do. The respect due to one so highly lifted above the common rank as a prophet of God, called for this acknowledgment. In its origin and in the right use of it among the Hebrews, the giving of presents to prophets was a praiseworthy custom. But it may be doubted whether the servant regarded the quarter-shekel as only a mark of respect. It looks more like the price which an ignorant man would think of paying for divining. When every allowance is made for the vast difference between Eastern and Western ways, the tone and words of the servant are those of a man who expected to bring the search to a successful close by means of a fortune-teller. 'A man of God,' who resided in Naioth, was unlike others who usurped that name; 'he was honoured,' the servant said, 'all that he saith cometh surely to pass.' In those days the word of God came to few. 'There was no open,' that is frequent, 'vision.' Prophets did not abound among the Hebrews. But in their place had risen up a host of men and women, who pretended to a knowledge of the unseen and the unknown. In the cities and villages were *witches* and *wizards*, as these claimants to the prophetic office were then styled by the followers of Jehovah, or *seers*, as they called themselves, by whose tricks the simple people were deceived. They sold their services for silver and gold. They were mere fortune-tellers, who, by superior address and cunning, brought their neighbours to believe in them as servants of the true God. There is reason to fear, that the prophet they sought was regarded by the servant of Saul as but a superior member of this craft. Other members of Saul's family were more enlightened. His uncle, as is evident from the narrative, was as well acquainted with the greatness of Samuel as any reader of the sacred books. And the ignorance which the two travellers show before the meeting with the prophet, stands out in strong contrast with the knowledge they show after it. The ignorance cannot, therefore, have been without a cause. When they returned home, and were asked by Saul's uncle, 'Whither

went ye?' their plain answer makes their previous ignorance almost inexplicable: 'To seek the asses; and when we saw that they were nowhere, we came to Samuel.'

As the word for 'present' occurs nowhere in Scripture but in this passage, it is impossible to infer from the use of it the sentiments of Saul's servant. But at a much later period it is applied by Jewish interpreters in a way which gives rise to suspicion. When they are translating the Chaldee for *gift* in the promises of reward made by Nebuchadnezzar to the Babylonian soothsayers (Dan. ii. 6, v. 17), they express the king's meaning by using the Hebrew word, which they found in this story of Saul and his servant.

That Saul was young, and that he was seldom absent from home, are inferences fairly deducible from the narrative. That neither he nor his family were considered likely to have any dealings with Samuel and his friends is equally certain. Saul might therefore have been in the neighbourhood of this town, without recognising in it the city of the judge and prophet Samuel. If, moreover, the servant was a slave, and if, besides, he was a stranger brought among the Hebrews by war or trade, his ignorance of the home and greatness of Samuel is not a matter for surprise. Men were little given to travel in those times; but a journey such as that for the lost asses might, in a few days, impart more knowledge than young travellers had gathered all their lives before.

It may possibly seem strange that a youth of Saul's age and tribe should not have had many opportunities of, at least, seeing Samuel and knowing somewhat about him at the three great festivals of the Hebrew people. Even a single visit to the tabernacle, during one of the feasts, ought to have imparted all the knowledge that was needed. But there was in both him and his servant an ignorance most profound of Samuel's person, office, and power. An easy way of cutting the knot of this difficulty is to regard the great feasts of the Hebrews as the growth of a later age: the feasts of Passover,

Pentecost, and Tabernacles thus become the coinage of Solomon or Josiah's age, and have been falsely attributed to Moses. This is a cutting, not an unravelling, of the knot; but history has often to decline what criticism is prone to accept. Shiloh, the meeting-place of the tribes, had been desolated by the storms of war under circumstances so dreadful that, though not handed down to us in writing, they were printed on the nation's heart for five centuries afterwards. No meeting-place of the people existed in Saul's time, at least no place sanctioned by the command of God. But this scattering of the tribes from their central altar did not come alone. It was accompanied by conquest and slavery. The anxiety of Kish for his son shows the danger of travelling: 'the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways.' Great gatherings of the tribes could not be held. The conqueror would not tolerate them. The people would shrink from meeting in their full strength, lest a sudden attack by armed foes on a peaceful gathering might be the result. The destruction of Shiloh and the conquest of the land explain the obscurity into which Samuel had fallen, at least among the youth of the Hebrews. The Levitical system was then in a state of paralysis.

As the two travellers were climbing the hill on which the town was built, they met a number of maidens coming down for water, perhaps to the well Sechu, or Prospect, of which mention is made at a later stage of the history. The young men asked if the seer were in the town. The water-bearers willingly entered into conversation with the tall and goodly youth who thus accosted them. A long conversation seems to have taken place, but only the heads of it are recorded. It is easy, however, to see in them the eagerness of the young women to communicate to the stranger all they knew about the man of God. From them Saul learned that a sacrifice was to take place that day, and that the seer had shortly before arrived in the town. The maidens urged him not

to waste time. Their words even assured him of as kindly a reception from the seer as he had got from them. Perhaps they thought of him as one of the guests invited to that sacrificial feast. The tall and goodly youth had touched the maidens' hearts.

On approaching the gate, Saul and his servant met the procession of citizens on its way to the high place. They stood aside in the open space fronting the gate to let the crowd pass. Musicians, playing on flutes and drums, on tabrets and harps, or singing some song of praise, led the way. The bullock destined for sacrifice followed, unless it had been already slain and dressed for the feast. Samuel, attended by about thirty invited guests, came behind. His eye that day was never satisfied with seeing; on whomsoever it fell, it looked him through and through. The keenness of intelligence in Samuel was sharpened by the restlessness of curiosity and doubt. While on the road to the town the day before, it was announced to him that, in or near the city, he should meet the man chosen to be king over the land. Even the hour for the meeting was named: 'About this time to-morrow will I send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him for prince over my people Israel.' At that very hour Samuel came forth from the city with the procession going to the high place. Every step was bringing him nearer to the king and deliverer of the nation. As his eye fell on the handsome figure of Saul, rising above the heads of all others in the open space before the gate, he appears to have said within himself, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him.' He was answered by the word of God: 'Behold the man whom I spake to thee of; this same shall reign over my people.'

There was something in the air and manner of Samuel which emboldened Saul to step forward and speak. Probably also a sign, with hand or look, may have been given to the young man of the seer's wish to enter into conversation. Saul, ignorant of the greatness of the man whom he was moving

forward to address, said, with the respect always paid to age by well-bred Hebrews, 'Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.' Samuel at once put his mind at rest. He speaks to him as to one whom he had known for years, whose errand he understood, and in whose welfare he took the deepest interest. 'I am the seer: go thou up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to-day, and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for the asses that were lost to thee three days ago, set not thy mind on them, for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?' Astonished at the honour thus done him, and unable to understand the reason of it, Saul replies with a modesty as natural as it was well founded: 'Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore, then, speakest thou so to me?' Probably within sight of both of them at that moment was the neighbourhood or the village of Bethlehem, which a later prophet, catching up the words as well as the idea of Saul, described as 'little among the thousands of Judah,' but out of it 'shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting' (Mic. v. 2).

The conversation between the prophet and the future king, though begun in 'the midst of the gate,' was not carried on there. Some of the loiterers or onlookers might have overheard enough to excite surprise, if not suspicion. In that case the secret would soon have become public talk. But no one overheard the conversation, and Saul concealed it even from his nearest relatives. Though begun in the open space fronting the city gate, it was most likely carried on while they were walking alone in the rear of the procession, as it swept upwards to the high place of the town. If Samuel, on the following day, took the precaution of sending the servant forward before he anointed Saul, he would be equally cautious

to let no one standing by overhear the words he was speaking in the gate.

The sacrifice was followed by a feast, if, indeed, it was anything else than a feast. About thirty guests had been invited to meet the prophet. After the sacred services of the afternoon were brought to an end, they assembled in a dining-room built on the hill. The place of honour was reserved for Samuel; the guests, seated on the floor, took their places on either side, according to rank. The stranger and his servant were seated near the prophet, perhaps beside him, in the chiefest place among them that were bidden. Nor was that the only mark of honour shown to the future chief of the nation. Agreeably to Eastern custom, the cook received orders to set before him a choice portion, reserved on the previous day for that purpose. As he did so, the prophet informed Saul of the honour and the reason for it: 'Behold that which is reserved. Begin; eat; for unto this meeting hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people.'

The custom of offering sacrifice on other high places than Shiloh or Moriah, though strictly forbidden in the Mosaic law and condemned under the monarchy, seems to be here sanctioned by Samuel, one of the greatest of all the prophets. A breach of law so glaring requires no words to make it more glaring. But before we regard Samuel as a breaker of the law, we ought to be sure of the accuracy of our position. Every word in a narrative so brief as this history, requires to be carefully weighed by a modern reader. A departure, however slight, from the position of the ancient writer may involve almost inextricable confusion of thought. Words omitted from the text require to be examined not less than words admitted. Now, while a sacrifice is spoken of in the narrative, not a word is said about an altar. The former does not imply the latter, nor does the latter imply the former. 'Go thou up before me unto the high place,' said Samuel; he did not say, 'unto the altar' (1 Sam. vii. 17). A sacrifice according to the



law did not always imply an altar, for the word was twofold in its meaning. It meant a priestly sacrifice, or a popular sacrifice. These were two different things, strictly defined in the law-book, and differently taxed for the priests. To confound the one with the other is to misread the history. A *popular* sacrifice was an animal slain for food in any part of the country. It was called a sacrifice because the law required the blood, that is, the life, to be thoroughly drained from the victim and poured upon the ground. A *priestly* sacrifice was a whole burnt-offering, a peace-offering, a sin-offering, or a trespass-offering. It implied an altar, especially the brazen altar of the tabernacle; a priest's portion different from the priest's portion of a popular sacrifice; and the burning of the whole or part, 'a sweet-smelling savour' to God. The popular sacrifice was slain as food for man; the priestly sacrifice was slain as atonement to Jehovah. The former is even called 'a sacrifice to Jehovah,' and the celebrants might be summoned to consecrate themselves for it. Had the Hebrew word for 'sacrifice' been always so translated into English where it occurs in Hebrew, this distinction could not have been overlooked. Unfortunately, the meaning of the word has been completely obscured by the treatment it has received. But it is not necessary to go farther into the matter here. The distinction is laid down with the utmost clearness in the chapter of Deuteronomy known as the law of the central altar, and will be fully discussed in a subsequent part of this work.

The sacrifice which Samuel offered on the high place was not a peace-offering, that is, not a priestly or atoning sacrifice. A victim was slain for food, perhaps more than one victim, if we take thought of the number of guests. Its blood was poured out on the ground, and the whole of the flesh was eaten by the assembled guests. The proof of this is as convincing as it is simple. Every peace-offering, presented at the altar, was returned to the offerer to be feasted on by him and his friends. A few choice pieces were reserved as

‘Jehovah’s fire dues.’ Of these, the shoulder went to the priest who happened to have charge of the altar.<sup>1</sup> But in the sacrifice of Samuel, this priest’s portion, for the word is the same, is set aside for a man known to belong to the tribe of Benjamin, and forbidden under severest penalties to eat of it. If Samuel offered an atoning sacrifice and reserved the priest’s portion for Saul, he was guilty of sacrilege. But the priest’s portion of an ordinary victim slain for food was different. In that case there was no sacrilege in reserving the shoulder for Saul; there was, as there was intended to be, the giving to him a royal honour. But these and other historical puzzles of the same kind will come up afterwards for fuller solution. On returning from the high place to the village, Saul became the guest of the prophet. They appear to have been highly pleased with one another during the few hours they were then together. The house-top was a secret place, where they communed alone, safe from the ears of the curious. Saul manifested a modesty of demeanour, and a willingness to obey, that confirmed Samuel in the high opinion he formed of the young man from his handsome looks. ‘The message of God’ was reserved for the morning. As day dawned, the prophet himself, desirous to do honour to the new king, summoned him from his couch on the house-top, where he appears to have spent the night. It was a high honour paid to the youth when the seer discharged a duty that might otherwise have been the work of a menial. ‘And Samuel called to the house-top to Saul, saying, Rise, and I will send thee away.’

But the highest mark of respect, and the surest proof of the reality of what Saul might then have looked on as a dream, were given when the two strangers were leaving the city.

<sup>1</sup> The words *shoulder* (*leg*), *bring*, *portion* (1 Sam. ix. 23, 24), are suggestive of sacred things found in the Levitical law (Lev. vii. 33, 34). *Cook* may be the correct rendering of the Hebrew word (comp. 1 Sam. viii. 13); but *slayer* is as likely, and may refer to an officiating priest or Levite. ‘The shoulder, and that upon it,’ is another most puzzling phrase, pointing back to a law that would have been violated had Samuel been offering a priestly sacrifice (Lev. iii. 4, vii. 28-34).

Samuel accompanied them part of the way. As soon as they passed the last of the houses on their way down the hill, Samuel requested Saul to stay behind, while the servant went forward. He told the youth that he had received for him a message from Heaven. They were alone on the hill-side, screened from the view of all except Him, whose eyes run to and fro throughout the earth. Suddenly Samuel drew forth from his girdle pocket a bottle of oil, wherewith to anoint the new king. He had been instructed by God to set Saul apart for his high office by this solemn rite. He seems to have taken the young man by surprise. Pouring the oil on his head before he was aware, Samuel replied to his looks, if not to his words of astonishment, 'Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee for captain over His inheritance?' At the same time he gave the youth a kiss of friendship and respect, to show that nothing was farther from his thoughts than insincere homage to a humble stranger, who came seeking his help. But Saul's fears were not so easily allayed. Conscious of his own unworthiness, and knowing of nothing in himself or his family to entitle him to kingly honours, he seems to have shown by looks and words an unwillingness, not blameworthy, to believe the prophet. If, as is not unlikely, he sought counsel of Samuel, as he would have done of any of the pretended prophets who then filled the land, his doubts and reluctance were founded in reason. Be that as it may, his demeanour, if not his freely-expressed astonishment, demanded from the seer some proof of the right he claimed to speak in the name of Jehovah. 'Signs,' he had been taught in the law-book, were given by prophets to prove their commission. His early teaching may have now come to his help. Nor was a demand so reasonable refused. On the contrary, Samuel gave him overwhelming evidence of the truth of his commission, by foretelling to him several of the incidents of his day's journey. These signs must have removed from Saul's mind any lingering doubt or suspicion.

The custom of anointing a king, enjoined at this time by

God, continued during the four centuries of the monarchy which followed. But it was not the ancient way of setting apart a political chief for the nation. Moses was not thus installed in his high office; nor was his successor, Joshua. A full account is given of the setting apart of the latter, but the principal features of the ceremony were the placing of Joshua before the high priest, the laying of Moses' hands on his head, and the giving of him a charge before all the people (Num. xxvii. 18). There is no trace of anointing in his case, or for any office then existing in the civil life of the Hebrews. Nor is it found in the law of the king delivered in the book of Deuteronomy. The phrases used there, as well as in Samuel, are 'to set a king over the nation' and 'to choose a king,' while other phrases common to Samuel and the later books are 'to anoint a king' and 'to make a king.' Manifestly the book of Samuel is, as it were, common ground; while it retains the phrases of the early law in Deuteronomy, it introduces a new phrase, which became part of the popular speech in all time coming. But it gives its readers no idea of the source from which the phrase 'to anoint a king' originally came. Anointing, the laying on of hands, and the giving of a charge from the sacred books of the nation, were usual ceremonies at the coronation of a king in Egypt. Moses was acquainted with these customs. Far from imitating them in the rules he laid down in the law-book, he appears rather to have expressly left them out in his regulations. There was no anointing prescribed, such as the priests of Egypt, and long afterwards the high priests and prophets of Israel, are known to have practised. Nor was the laying on of hands set down by Moses among the coronation ceremonies, such as may be seen on the monuments of Egypt, and as is known to have been practised at the installation of Joshua. The giving of a charge, usual in Egypt, and delivered by Moses in Joshua's case, was not commanded for the kings of Israel. A more effectual plan was adopted to secure a king's respect for law. 'He shall write him a copy of this law ;

and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.' Although, then, Deuteronomy was not the source from which the idea of anointing the king came, the propriety or necessity of the custom found a lodgment in Hebrew thought at an early period. Jotham, the son of Gideon, about two centuries after the conquest, and Hannah, the mother of Samuel, a century later still, are witnesses to the existence of the phrase in their day. It may have been a traditional saying, handed down among the Hebrews in anticipation of the time when the law of the king, embodied in the popular law-book, should be realized in the nation's history. That it is not found in the book of Deuteronomy is a clear indication of the great age of that book, compared with the parable of Jotham or the anointing of Saul.

Saul had not advanced far on his journey before 'the signs,' given to him by Samuel, began to come to pass. At the tomb of Rachel, by the border of Benjamin and 'a little way' from Bethlehem, he lighted on two men, who told him of the finding of the asses, and the grief of Kish at the prolonged absence of his son. This was the first sign promised. The second befell a little farther on, at the oak (plain) of Tabor. Meeting Saul, apparently at a cross-road, came three men, who, after a friendly greeting, told him they were 'going up to God, to God's house.' One of them was bearing three kids, another three rounds of bread, and the third a skin of wine. Had the town of Bethel been their destination, the words 'to God' conveyed no meaning. 'To God's house' explained the first part of their statement, 'Going up to God.' The three kids were evidently firstlings, which, in terms of the law, they were conveying to the altar. They could not be tithes, for these the Levites themselves collected. Nob was evidently their destination. As the distance they had to go was not more than a mile or two, they readily furnished the travellers with two of the three rounds of bread for the longer journey to Gibeah, which they had still to make. Bethel was twice as

far off as Gibeah, and on the same road. Saul and the strangers did not require to part company, if Bethel was the destination of the latter; but the tabernacle at Nob—God's house—lay off Saul's road. The third sign befell them as they approached a well-known garrison of the Philistines. It is called Gibeah (or Hill) of God. It may have been the town of Gibeah, in or near which Saul dwelt. As he and his servant passed a rising-ground or Bamah, close to the place, a string of prophets, as the phrase ran, was seen coming down the slope. Players on lyre, drum, fife, and harp led the procession, while the rest of the band accompanied the instruments with the voice. They were prophesying, or singing the sacred songs of Hebrew worship, at the hour of afternoon or evening sacrifice. Saul was warned beforehand that the Spirit of Jehovah would fall upon him as soon as they came in view, that he would join the singers, and become another man. He was urged also to offer no resistance to his feelings when these things happened. 'Do to thyself,' Samuel said, 'whatsoever thy hand shall find; for God is with thee.' The young man did not forget these words. As he listened to the pleasant strains of harp and drum, of lyre and fife, swelled by a chorus of fifty or a hundred voices, there awoke in his bosom feelings to which he had hitherto been a stranger. In after years music charmed the spirit of madness out of his heart. But, in these fresh hours of opening manhood, it stirred within him a desire to spend his life in following the counsels of a teacher like Samuel. Joining himself to the band of prophets, he at once took part with them in singing their songs of praise. He returned with the procession to the high place from which it set out, and to which it went back to conclude the afternoon worship of the day. The onlookers, of whom there would usually be a considerable crowd, especially in the afternoon when the day's work was mostly done, were surprised. Saul's home was not far from this Hill of God. Some of them must therefore have known the young Benjamite who thus

drew the eyes of strangers. But then, even as it happens now, they could not see or understand in Saul a change which they did not feel in themselves. Instead of returning thanks for another name enrolled among the witnesses to Jehovah's greatness in troublous times, they scoff at the sight of a youth, well known to be a stranger to religious feeling, making this sudden show of piety in a public place and before a wondering crowd. 'What has come over the son of Kish?' they ask, with a smile at the absurdity of the thing; 'Is even Saul among the prophets?' But there were others present equally ready to turn this scorning of scorers on themselves. 'Who is their father?' was the question put by some pious man among the crowd. 'You call him son of Kish; whose sons are these prophets? Samuel's? Then son of Kish no longer, son of Samuel now.' Such was the idea conveyed in the few words, 'Who is their father?' The scoffers might be right in regarding Saul, the son of Kish, as an unworthy member of the prophetic college; but the prophets believed Saul, the son or follower of Samuel, to have been made worthy of a place in their company.

On reaching home, Saul was met by his uncle, Ner, who had heard of his absence without knowing the cause. Probably the meeting took place on the evening of the day he left Samuel's house. On asking Saul whither he and the servant had gone, Ner was informed of the loss of the asses, and of the visit to the prophet. The mention of Samuel's name awakened a new train of thought in the mind of Ner. 'Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you,' was a request prompted by other feelings than mere curiosity. At that time the prophet was besieged by the nation with demands for a king to lead them in war. In every town and village one question stirred all hearts, high and low. Samuel had assured them their request would be granted. He did not tell them on whom the choice of Heaven had fallen. But every Hebrew knew that the appointment was in his hands, and would be

made known through him. If a stranger visited the prophet, or was seen in earnest conversation with him during those days of waiting, there were prying eyes quick enough to note the fact, and ready tongues as quick to spread it far and wide. In this state of the public mind, in this tossing betwixt hope and fear, it seems a fair inference, from the request made by Saul's uncle, to imagine hope or suspicion flashing across his mind regarding his nephew's visit to Samuel. If the handsome figure of the youth made the same impression on him as on Samuel, it was pardonable to reason thus: 'My nephew is the most handsome and kingly youth in the land: he has been visiting Samuel, with whom the selection of a king rests; can he be the man chosen for the throne?' If these thoughts occurred to Saul's uncle, it is easy to understand the half-coaxing, half-respectful tone in the inquiry: 'Tell me, I pray thee, what said Samuel unto you.' But the question was awkwardly worded: 'What Samuel said unto the two of you.' Ner had no idea of the prophet having said and done to Saul things of which the servant was ignorant. Saul appears to have seen this, and answered accordingly. He was in a difficult position. Nor do the words that are recorded bring the scene fully before our minds. Saul carried a strange and romantic secret in his bosom. It alone might well have made him another man, and wrought changes in him too marked to escape the eyes of a friend. When face to face with his uncle, could the youth have had such command over his eyes and voice, as to banish every trace of that honourable secret from his tones and looks and manner? We cannot imagine him to have been so practised in concealing secrets. The anointing took place in the morning; the day had been full of stirring events in Saul's history. One scene of excitement had followed another from morning to noon, from noon to night. The question of Ner was asked in the evening, a question sufficient to put to the severest trial a stronger nature than Saul's. Probably the uncle expected to hear something startling when he asked his



nephew what Samuel said. But the answer of Saul lulled all suspicion: 'He told us plainly that the asses were found.' Whatever Ner may have thought, or however closely he questioned his nephew, he failed to draw from him the slightest reference to the romantic adventure of which he was the hero. 'Of the matter of the kingdom he told him not.'

Before the choice of Jehovah was made known to the Hebrews, there appears to have been a private meeting between Samuel and Saul, at which the rights and duties of the kingly office were explained by the prophet. Under the guise of offering a solemn sacrifice to God, Samuel repaired to Gilgal, a favourite meeting-place of the Hebrews, situated on the banks of the Jordan, near Jericho. Saul, perhaps according to agreement made, descended from Gibeah to the same place seven days before, and waited the arrival of the prophet. What the reason may have been for allowing Saul to remain at Gilgal a week before Samuel made his appearance, we shall be better able to understand when we come to a repetition of the same command several years afterwards. But one thing is worthy of being borne in mind. The season of the year was early spring, as we reckon it, or nearly barley harvest in Palestine.

When the requisite arrangements were thus made for discovering to the Hebrews the chosen king, Samuel summoned an assembly of the people to Mizpeh, a city in the highlands of Benjamin, and a favourite meeting-place of the tribes. It was not heads of cantons and families only whom the business to be settled at that gathering concerned. Every man above twenty years of age had a right to be present. So far as human eyes could see or human understandings judge, every man had a chance of being chosen for the kingly seat. Nor did the Philistines, by whose garrisons several of the tribes were kept in check, prevent this meeting of the Hebrews. Before the tidings could reach Gath or Ekron, the assembly would be held, a king appointed, and the people

have returned to their homes; even if the attention of the Philistines was not then engaged with the warlike movements of Egypt or Assyria in their own plains.

The plan chosen for ascertaining the will of God at this meeting, was the same that the Hebrews followed at all turning points in their history. In the country round the camp, and before many thousands of eager onlookers, the names of the tribes, graven on stones or written on slips of parchment or paper such as was used at the time in Egypt, were placed in the sacred bag of the high priest's breastplate, in presence of the princes and elders. Then the high priest seems to have thrust in his hand and drawn one forth. At this great meeting the stone or slip first drawn forth was marked 'Benjamin.' From that tribe should come the king of the land. The heads of families in the canton were next arranged in order before Samuel. Each threw a lot for his family in the sacred bag. Again the high priest thrust in his hand: he brought forth the lot of Matri.<sup>1</sup> The men of that family then came forward. The circle of choice was thus gradually narrowing. Most of the men of Benjamin had lost their personal interest in the matter, when the second drawing narrowed still further the area from which a king should be taken. The hopes and interest of the few within this charmed circle became greater, as their chance of success grew better. But the third drawing stilled all hopes save one man's; it swept away chance in the certainty of a known result: the name drawn was that of the man who had been anointed a week or two before, that handsome and goodly youth, Saul, the son of Kish.

It may seem strange that the plan of ascertaining the will of God by lot should have been chosen, when Samuel knew beforehand on whom the lot should fall. Would it not have

<sup>1</sup> Those who hunt after inconsistencies in the story should compare with this family name Saul's lineage, given a page or two before—'Saul, Kish, Abiel, Zeror, Bechorath, Aphiah a Benjamite' (1 Sam. ix. 1). Matri is nowhere mentioned.

been simpler and more straightforward, had the prophet at once told the assembled tribes the name of the man chosen by God, and already anointed to the kingly office? In answering this question, we have to bear in mind several things, which must have had great weight with the prophet. A number of the leading men appear to have entertained hopes of securing the throne for themselves. And had Samuel merely informed them of the message he received, requiring him to anoint Saul, they would not have scrupled to decry the choice as a trick on the part of the prophet. 'He wishes to keep the reins of power in his own hands,' they would have said; 'the best way to manage this is by placing at the head of affairs a nobody, to be guided as he pleases.' But the lot silenced all these cavils. The Hebrew nobles might murmur at the elevation of an unknown youth to the throne; but every one must have felt in his heart, whatever he uttered with his lips, that, when the lot was cast into the lap at Mizpeh, the ordering thereof was of the Lord. It is further plain from the story, that the chiefs of the people no longer reposed confidence in the Judge of Israel. Whatever the reason may have been, they were ripe for revolt against his authority, they were suspicious of his actings, and they distrusted all his arrangements. Had he, in these circumstances, announced the choice of Saul as king, the discontented and the seditious would have had ground for complaining of unfairness. The lot left them no loophole. Samuel could exercise no control over the names in the bag of the high priest's breastplate. Beyond doubt, the choice of Saul was the work of Jehovah.

The drawing of the lots occupied a considerable time. But the third drawing was more tedious than the other two, for the names of perhaps one or two hundred men had to be handed to the high priest. While his countrymen and kindred were thus engaged, Saul, with becoming modesty, withdrew to the camp. As soon as the result of the drawing was

made known to the people, there arose a general demand for the new king. But he could nowhere be found. His friends and relatives knew of his presence among them an hour or two before. Some of them, perhaps, observing him leave the ranks, had inferred that he had gone home. The high priest, inquiring at the sacred oracle, 'Will he come hither again?' was told in reply, 'He hath hid himself among the baggage.' Saul was soon brought forth from his hiding-place to receive the homage of the people. When Samuel presented him to the vast assemblage with the short speech of introductory recommendation, 'See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people,' from every part of the host came the joyful shout, 'God save the king!'

Before the assembly broke up, Samuel read to them an important book or state paper, which is called in our translation, 'The manner of the kingdom.' In it he may have embodied part of the address which he delivered some time before, when endeavouring to bring home to the people their sin in asking a king. Both prince and people accepted the charter thus drawn out, and Samuel, by laying it among the national records preserved in the tabernacle, placed it under the protection of Jehovah. On the one hand, the king knew his duties and his prerogative; on the other hand, the people were made aware of their rights.

The choice of a king was soon found to have broken the bonds of union in the assembly. Three parties were at once evident. Of these the largest, numbering in its ranks the great body of the people, had neither good nor bad to say regarding the new king. They delayed making up their minds. They were waiting to see him show his fitness or unfitness for ruling the land. But the views of the other two parties were more decided. One of them, known as 'the band whose hearts God had touched,' hailing the election of Saul with unbounded joy, at once enrolled themselves as his followers and body-guard. The other, known as 'sons of Belial,' disappointed,

perhaps, in their hopes of gaining the kingly dignity themselves, and scorning to submit to an unknown youth, refused to pay him tribute or homage, and insultingly asked those who did, 'How shall this fellow save us?' Their rebellious speeches were carried to the ears of Saul. With a prudence that gave proof of his worthiness to fill the throne of a kingdom, he held his peace till he should have an opportunity of showing his right to reign.

The story of the choice of a king by Samuel has, within the past few years, become a battle-ground between the advocates of two different theories. All thinkers are agreed in allowing a close relationship between the words and thoughts in that story, and the words and thoughts of the book of Deuteronomy. Not long ago this relationship was neither seen nor suspected. But it is now admitted. At first the relationship was believed to be slight, then it was found to be intimate, at last it was discovered to be so close that out of 100 verses in the story as told in Samuel, nearly one-half borrow the words and thoughts of Deuteronomy. On another point there is agreement among scholars. No doubt whatever is entertained of the indebtedness of the writer in Samuel to the writer of Deuteronomy. The latter was the source from which the former borrowed. But the point of disagreement now comes to the surface. Were the words and phrases, borrowed from Deuteronomy, borrowed by the man who wrote the first edition of the book of Samuel, about 980 B.C., or were they inserted by a reviser, who published a new edition of the ancient work about 600 B.C.? One school pronounces the borrowing to be the work of the original writer in the first edition; another school pronounces it additions in a second and revised edition of the book four centuries after. The former believes the whole story to be a true narrative of facts; the latter regards it as a piece of manufactured goods, which, to say the least, is stamped with a forged trade-mark, and is made out of spurious stuff. The theory of a true

history and of allowable borrowing rests on assuming the existence of Deuteronomy in the days of Samuel; the theory of manufactured goods assumes the fabrication of that book three or four centuries afterwards.

Let us look first at the theory of a true history and allowable borrowing. If Deuteronomy was written by Moses about 1450 B.C., it could have been quoted by Samuel in 1100 B.C. On this point there is no difficulty. But one of the most important parts of Deuteronomy is the twelfth chapter, which lays down, *first*, the law of a central altar for the nation, on which alone acceptable sacrifice could be offered; and, *second*, the broad distinction, already mentioned, between priestly or atoning sacrifice, allowed at that altar only, and popular or festive sacrifice, allowed in any corner of the land. The history in Samuel contains frequent references to this chapter of Deuteronomy. Two of them may be presented here, because they occur in Samuel's speech shortly after Saul's election:

1 SAM. xii. 23 (20).

'I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart.'

DEUT. xii. 28, x. 12.

(1) 'Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee . . . when thou doest the good and the right in the sight of the Lord thy God.'

(2) 'To fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, . . . and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.'

Samuel's leave-taking of the people brought to mind the leave-taking of Moses. Each of them was handing over the reins of power to a younger man. But each of them had the same warning to utter, the same advice to give, and the same entreaty to make. Most naturally, therefore, does Samuel repeat the words and thoughts of the lawgiver. With all the dignity of age and office, he speaks words which his hearers may have often read in the popular law-book for themselves. But this parallel does not prove the indebtedness of the prophet to the lawgiver. It shows the likelihood of the debt.

A quotation from Deuteronomy in the leave-taking speech of Samuel makes this likelihood of borrowing more likely :

1 SAM. xii. 11.

‘ He delivered you out of the hands of *your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.*’

DEUT. xii. 10.

‘ When He giveth you rest from all *your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety.*’

xii. 14.

‘ If ye will fear the Lord, and serve Him, and obey His voice, and not rebel against the commandment (mouth) of the Lord.’

xiii. 4 (5).

‘ Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him.’

The words, ‘ your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe,’ are the same in the Hebrew of both books. And the adverb *safe*, occurring in no other part of Samuel, stamps the passage as borrowed. The quotations in the second passage are equally clear. And it is as fair a piece of criticism to say that the Prophet Samuel copied from the law-book, as to say that a later writer put words from the law-book into the prophet’s lips. How, then, is the point in dispute to be settled? There is one way of doing this, to which no objection can be taken on either side. It is the safest and the most satisfactory path out of the difficulty. Let a quotation from Deuteronomy, similar to ‘ your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety,’ and essential to the life of the context, be produced from a part of Samuel which is allowed to show no trace of a reviser’s hand. Our argument will then be complete. Now the story of Eli’s sons’ abuse of their priestly rights (1 Sam. ii. 12–17) is confessed to be a part of Samuel which no reviser had touched. It is even regarded with favour as a proof that laws were then in force opposed to the laws of Moses.<sup>1</sup> But in that story the book of Deuteronomy is quoted word for word, as shall be shown in its proper place (chap. ix.). There are, therefore, quotations starting up from most unexpected quarters, which prove the existence of Deuteronomy in Samuel’s time. Both the prophet

<sup>1</sup> Colenso, Part vii. 117.

and the princes had read the book. The words of the former are too clear to leave a shadow of doubt on his acquaintance with it. We even seem to be able to look over his shoulder as he reads the ancient writing, and to pick out chapter and verse which made most impression on his mind.

But if the Prophet Samuel had Deuteronomy in his hands, he may be charged with unwarrantably refusing to allow the people to exercise their legal right of choosing a king. As the story is briefly told, mistakes may be easily committed, unless its words are carefully considered. For Samuel did not refuse to grant the people's prayer. He was 'displeased' with it; he regarded it as a personal affront, but he never condemned it as unwarranted by the law of the land. And he was reprimanded by Jehovah for the selfish view he took of its bearing, as well as ordered to give it effect. The words used throughout the narrative of Saul's election are the words and ideas which a reader of Deuteronomy would use, except in one point. That exception is the anointing of the king. And as the exception often proves a rule in other things, so the exception here proves the indebtedness of Samuel to the fifth book of the lawgiver.

But let the other theory be looked at in its bearings on the history. A late reviser, reading the law of the central altar in the twelfth chapter of Deuteronomy, is believed to have added quotations from it to the original book of Samuel. He had a purpose in view. That purpose was to make the worship of Samuel's time (1100 B.C.) seem to have been the same as the worship in his own time (600 B.C.); or to make Samuel and his contemporaries seem to have been acquainted with the book of Deuteronomy, although they were not. He would not do this with one part of the book of Samuel; he would do it with the whole, otherwise he would expose himself to the charges of folly and forgery combined. But the writers who pretend to have discovered this reviser's hand, acknowledge the feebleness with which he carried out



his intentions. He failed completely in his purpose. His critics profess to trace what he has done in some parts of the book, by what he has left undone in others. He knew the law of the central altar; he did not dare, they say, to change any parts of the history which show that that law was unknown in Samuel's day. According to them, therefore, he was both a forger in changing what he did change, and a fool in not changing far more to keep his other changes from being discovered. This theory does not hang together. A reviser, who undertook to meddle with an ancient writing for a specific purpose, ought to be credited with always, or at least generally, keeping that purpose in view. But he has scarcely kept it in view at all. More frequently has he left it out of account. A better solution of the difficulty is therefore to treat the theory as the blunder of a puzzled, or baffled, criticism.

The dishonesty of the forgery is made light of by the advocates of this theory. No right of property was then recognised in books, it is said. Every man could help himself to what he found written, could change it at his pleasure, and could publish it to the world as his own or as the original author's work. Great and serious changes on an ancient book by an unknown hand did not imply dishonesty or forgery. Such is the view taken in modern times of the sentiments entertained 3000 years ago regarding changes made on written documents. It is more to the purpose to discover what the men of those distant days thought and said on the point. Modern writers may be attributing to them sentiments which they would have repudiated. Half-a-dozen lines from a hand that has been cold for a score of centuries, are of more worth than whole libraries of modern thinking on the subject. And not to mention others, Sargon, the great king of Assyria (707 B.C.), has left a testimony which might make the advocates of this theory blush. The last words of the long annals of his reign are: 'Whoever shall alter my writings and my

name may Assur, the great god, throw down his sword ; may he exterminate in this land his name and his offspring, and may he never pardon him this sin.' Dishonesty and forgery in writings were esteemed as discreditable in Sargon's days as in ours—perhaps more so.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TESTING OF SAUL.

(1 SAM. xi.)

THE fitness of Saul to rule was soon put to the test. For some time before his election, Nahash, king of Ammon, had been threatening the country on both sides of the Jordan. A century before, his predecessor on the throne was content to demand a peaceable return of the lands which were conquered by Moses on the east side of Jordan. Nahash is more aspiring. What his ancestors lost he means to recover; but he will conquer or destroy more. He chose the time of harvest for making the attempt (1 Sam. xii. 17). His armies had already overrun the rich fields of Gilead, and were advancing northwards to the ford at Bethshean, where the Jordan, opening out to a considerable breadth, is easily crossed at that sultry season. The town of Jabesh Gilead, situated on a height overlooking a long valley that sloped down to the ford of the river, lay on his road. He could not with safety cross the Jordan, unless this fortress were wrested from the Hebrews. He could not reap the fertile fields of Western Palestine, or eat them up with his flocks and herds, until Jabesh was in his hands. When he appeared before the town, he found it so strong that, though he might have reduced it by famine, he would, perhaps, have been unable to take it by assault. On the other hand, the citizens, believing the danger greater if they resisted his arms, were willing to become his vassals on honourable terms of peace. But Nahash was not disposed to moderation. He was bent on reading the Hebrews a lesson that should make even their distant tribes unwilling to risk

further opposition to his progress. Like many other conquerors, who have made one terrible example pave an easy way to a score of bloodless triumphs, he resolved on giving terms to Jabesh which should spread the fear of his name to the utmost bounds of Israel. The plan was simple and not uncommon: its success or failure depended entirely on the spirit that animated the Hebrews. When the citizens professed their willingness to submit, and requested Nahash to grant them an alliance, the Ammonite replied that the putting out of the right eye of every townsman was the first condition of peace. They and all who should hear of it were left to infer the fate in store for the next city which dared to close its gates in the face of his army. 'I will put a reproach on all Israel,' was the boastful addition made by Nahash to these hard terms of peace. Not content with punishing the few who defied his arms, he soars so high as to think, in these few, of aiming a blow at the honour of the nation and its God. But the Serpent of Ammon—for such is the meaning of his name—was not destined to crush out the life of Israel in his folds.

In this pride of the enemy, the elders of the city found an opening for at least seeking relief. If the reproach is to be put on all Israel, not on us alone, they seem to have said, All Israel should know how far their honour is at stake. 'Give us seven days,' they said (a period of time which frequently occurs in the brief story of Saul); 'that we may send messengers to every bound of the land, and if then there be none to save us we shall come forth to thee.' This appeal touched the pride of Nahash. However long he might delay, he believed the Hebrews would not undertake to relieve the beleaguered city. By a week's delay, his defiance of the whole nation would be more thorough, and their fear of his arms more profound. If the king they had chosen did not band them together against him, his course after the capture of Jabesh would be but a march of triumph across the land.

There would be no siege to detain him, no army to offer him battle. With these views, the request of the citizens was granted as soon as it was made.

It seems to have been late that summer afternoon when the terms of this treaty were settled. Next morning messengers were on their way to demand assistance from their countrymen. Towards sunset they reached Gibeah, about fifty miles off. Many of the peasant and farmer citizens, set free from the labours of the day, were assembled at the gate to talk over public affairs or to retail the gossip of the neighbourhood. Others were joining them every moment. The arrival of the messengers was a source of excitement to the waiting groups. Spent with a long and weary journey, covered with dust, they are soon the centre of an eager crowd, who hang upon their words. Their message concerns every man of Hebrew blood. It specially concerns these Benjamites of Gibeah, between whom and Jabesh there were ancient ties of kindred (Judg. xxi. 14). Unaccustomed to the ways of statesmen, they err in delivering to a city crowd the message entrusted to them for the king. But neither he nor they nor the groups in the gate take the same views of kingly grandeur and kingly reserve, which modern critics may be surprised they should have forgotten. It was a message to the whole nation—a message, too, which their bursting hearts could not contain till it should be delivered to the nation's head. Many years before, the swift runner, who brought the first tidings to Shiloh of that fatal day when the ark of God was taken in battle, avoided Eli, the judge of the land, as he sat waiting and watching at the wayside. He told his tale of sorrow to the city crowd, in the same way as these messengers from Jabesh forgot their king and addressed themselves directly to their countrymen. A loud burst of sorrow from the group in the gate proclaims how deeply the iron has entered into their soul. All-Israel still thinks and feels as one people. Nahash may pride himself on his success: he has struck his enemy

through the heart. Meanwhile, Saul is on his way townward from the fields, it may be from threshing barley; he is driving oxen before him. Though the king of a great and enlightened nation, he is not ashamed to till his father's fields or his own. He has not forgotten the law which forbade him to lift his heart 'above his brethren.' The messengers finish their story as he draws near; a wild burst of grief rises from the crowd. As he hears their cry, the spirit of the ruler is stirred within him; the heart of the king, the father of his people, is touched. 'What aileth the people that they are weeping?' he asks of those who come running to meet him, some perhaps of his chosen band. They bring him to the gate, where the messengers recount—as if out of a written book—the 'case of the men of Jabesh.' Instantly a power from above fills the bosom of Saul. The hour has come to vindicate his title to the throne; the tide that shall bear him on to undisputed empire has begun to flow. The soldier, the ruler, the king awoken within him, each to play its several part. He stands forth the only man equal to the time in that hour of alarm.

A couple of the oxen belonging to Saul are slaughtered on the spot, and cut in pieces. 'Go to every bound of Israel,' he said to the men who had come from Jabesh, and who could best tell their own story, 'proclaim that thus shall it be done to the oxen of every one who followeth not after Saul and Samuel.' He named the trysting-place and the day of meeting. A ring of triumph, like the ring of pure gold, sounded from his words and acts. 'Every bound of Israel' was the borrowing of a phrase used by the elders of Jabesh when they spoke with Nahash. If, as the words in the Hebrew original imply, they sent a written message to Saul, there is here, as there is throughout the whole book of Samuel, an unquestionable quoting from previously existing documents. As the enemy had command of the whole of Gilead, the only tribes summoned to the war were the nine and a half on the western side of Jordan. By this means the

Ammonite was kept in ignorance of what was passing among the Hebrews. To seize the fords and prevent spies or traitors from crossing would be the first step of Saul. The warlike movements of the tribes were thus kept a secret from Nahash; for the silver thread of the narrow river was a screen which he could not pierce to see what was passing on the other side. Besides, he was too conscious of his own strength to take the trouble. The messengers made good use of the respite. A burst of patriotic feeling, such as had not been known for many years, stirred the nation to its heart. The fear of Jehovah fell upon the tribes, the fear of evils He would bring down on them, if they allowed the reproach which Nahash had already cast on His name to pass unrebuked. Before the end of the week, Saul was at the head of 330,000 men. The rapidity with which that army was raised, shows a completeness of organization within each tribe that indicates the necessity felt for every man to be ready to seize his arms, to pack up his provisions, and to hasten to the meeting-place of his district. Israel was then standing prepared for war, its hand upon the sword. But the comparatively small force furnished by Judah, and the distinction drawn between it and Israel, as the other eight or nine tribes are called, have always been cause of surprise. Because Israel and Judah became separate kingdoms more than a century afterwards, the historian is here supposed to indicate the beginning of the jealousy which ultimately caused the split. But this explanation is too easy. It seems also unreasonable to preface a war for union among the tribes with a plain hint of their future disunion. This explanation assumes the author of the book to have flourished after Solomon's death, and of this there is not sufficient proof. It also ascribes the distinction to the author, not to the ancient records which he consulted. Another explanation must therefore be looked for. And here the small number of men furnished by Judah comes into play. According to the tribal rolls at the conquest

under Joshua, it ought to have furnished 50,000, not 30,000. But according to the rolls in the book of Samuel itself (2 Sam. xxiv. 9), Judah ought to have sent to the war more than 100,000 men. At a later period in Saul's reign, it sends 10,000 men to the army, while the other tribes send 200,000. It ought to have sent 30,000 or 80,000. Judah had evidently a right of exemption from service not enjoyed by other tribes. While their contingents were slumped together in the records of the nation, Judah's were entered separately. Nor is the reason far to seek. The tribe was strong in men, but weak in position. As soon as soldiers marched north from its towns and villages, Philistines, Edomites, and Amalekites might fall on the unprotected borders. No other tribe was in this position. Judah had to do police duty against evil-disposed neighbours for itself and for Hebrew kinsfolk. Hence a force sent abroad implied as great a force retained under arms at home. By giving the muster roll of Judah at the end of David's reign, the author of Samuel calls special attention to the small contingents it furnished for wars abroad. Acting on his usual principle of not assigning reasons when they lie on the surface, he assigns none here; but he furnishes facts, from which a reader can discover the reason for himself. Writing a century later than the relief of Jabesh Gilead, he found the numbers entered as he states them in the sources from which he borrowed. He made no change in the entry; and he gave no reason for the distinction drawn. He is generally supposed to have made the distinction himself; but of this there is no proof whatever.

The soldiers assembled near a place called Bezek, the site of which, though now unknown, cannot be far from the ford of Jordan below Bethshean. Samuel was with the army; and to add solemnity to the occasion, the ark of God appears to have been brought from its resting-place at Kirjath. Nahash was lulled into security by a well-planned stratagem. On the



evening of the last day of respite the messengers were seen returning to Jabesh. They bring no help with them: there is no army at their back. We can easily imagine their down-cast looks, their justifiable dissimulation as they pass through the lines of the besiegers, everything proclaiming that the Hebrews beyond Jordan are afraid to move to their brethren's relief. But when the walls of Jabesh are between them and the Ammonite, they become other men. From mouth to mouth pass the cheering tidings of help close at hand. In an assembly of the citizens steps are at once taken to second the attack of their approaching countrymen. But since they must send an answer to the enemy's camp, it is also resolved to lull the Ammonites into security. A deputation from the elders of the city waits upon the captains of Nahash. Without saying so in as many words, they profess themselves willing to become his servants; at least they give that impression: 'To-morrow,' they said, 'will we come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.' The phrase, 'to do according to all the good in thine eyes,' is common in the book of Samuel. Like other phrases in that history, it appears to be borrowed from the well-known law of the central altar in Deuteronomy (xii. 28). The words were such as people accustomed to read that law would use as a proverbial saying. The feint has succeeded. Nahash and his captains believe the deputation can have but one meaning. They are mistaken. While the Hebrews mean to come out in arms to do battle with the besiegers, Nahash imagines they mean to come forth from the fortress to have their right eyes put out. A feeling of security spreads through the camp. From the highest to the lowest among them, the invaders feel as safe as if camped in their own Ammon. No enemies are near: no attack need be feared. To-morrow will see them masters of Jabesh: to-morrow in one hour will a reproach be rolled on Israel, which a hundred years may not suffice to roll away. When the besieged thus fenced with words, they won

an easy victory over simpletons, who could see only one meaning in ambiguous language.

Imitating the tactics of great Hebrew soldiers in former days, Saul resolved to surprise the enemy by a night march and a night attack. Perhaps the moon was favourable for the attempt. But the people of the district through which he would have to pass were all bitterly opposed to Nahash, and would guide his march. Towards nightfall the Hebrew troops appear to have approached the ford of Jordan, where a strict watch would be kept against spies and traitors. Choosing the best of his soldiers as a forlorn hope for a desperate enterprise, Saul hastened with them towards Jabesh, twelve or fifteen miles distant. The rest of the army could follow at greater leisure. Dividing the chosen band into three brigades, a plan forced on him by the nature of the ground, or adopted in imitation of Gideon, he fell on the enemy shortly before day-break. The Hebrews were speedily in the midst of the careless and slumbering host. A fourth onset from the town added to the terror and confusion caused by Saul's threefold battle. A panic fell on the surprised and ill-disciplined invaders. Multitudes were trampled down by their fellows on the field and in the pursuit. Before nine o'clock, or about four hours after the first onset, the invading host had been thoroughly broken; not two of them were left together. The Hebrews, who followed Saul's forlorn hope from the fords of Jordan, would come up in time to complete the victory, or to intercept the fugitive army. And thus in the course of that morning had All-Israel escaped a dreaded reproach by the energy of its sovereign.

The 'reproach' which Nahash proposed to put on his enemies in All-Israel was rolled away from them, and put upon himself. A king had vindicated his right to reign by saving his people from an intended disgrace. The same word turns up afterwards in the history of Saul, and in the same way. Another champion of the heathen appeared, as

boastful as Nahash, and like him enjoying for a few weeks the delight of apparent success. Goliath proposed to do what Nahash failed in—put a reproach on All-Israel. For six weeks he enjoyed his boasting over Saul and the Hebrew army. But again, as in Saul's case, a new champion rolled the disgrace away, and vindicated his right to the throne. 'David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel?' (1 Sam. xvii. 26).

The triumph at Jabesh soon bore fruit. Filled with admiration of their leader, the soldiers demanded from Samuel the names of the men who had rejected the new king. A party in the state ridiculed his right and title. Samuel, to whom the leaders had probably expressed their sentiments, was the only person who could give their names. Accordingly, the soldiers sent a deputation to the prophet to express their views. 'Who was it that said, Shall Saul reign over us?' they asked: 'Give up the men that we may kill them.' Soldiers flushed with victory, full of patriotism, devoted to the king who had shown them how to win battles, such men meant what they said. But Saul, who was present at the time, or to whom the matter was referred, showed himself not less worthy of the throne in the cabinet than he had been in the field. 'There shall not a man die this day,' he said; 'for to-day hath Jehovah wrought salvation in Israel.' Forgiveness, not of an injury, but of an open affront, so nobly given, revealed in Saul springs of a manly greatness. Had they welled forth in later days under different circumstances, his life, instead of being a barren waste, might have been a field fertile of noble deeds.

With a wisdom befitting his years, Samuel took advantage of the triumph of the king and of the ardour of the soldiers to establish the throne on a sure basis. While strengthening Saul in his resolution to put no Hebrew to death, he proposed to the army a march to Gilgal, and a renewal of the kingdom

there. If any were lukewarm in the cause of Saul before, they might now show more fervour ; if any had ridiculed and rejected the anointed of God, events had convinced them of their mistake. This renewal of the kingdom was nothing else than giving the leading men of the land a chance of paying to Saul the homage which they had formerly refused. It was a well-planned means of bringing the chiefs cheerfully to acknowledge a power, against which many of them were disposed to rebel. And the plan succeeded. Accompanied by the ark of God, the whole army repaired to Gilgal. Peace-offerings were burnt on the altar at that place, or on the brazen altar brought from Nob, some distance off among the hills. And with such heartiness was Saul acknowledged king by princes and people, that at no time during the remainder of his reign does there appear to have been a murmur against his right to rule. Discontented chiefs may afterwards have chosen to acknowledge Philistine supremacy instead of his authority. They appear, indeed, to have followed this course. But they made no open or recorded attempt to overturn his throne.

This renewal of the kingdom is said to have been made 'before the Lord in Gilgal.' And 'before the Lord' they at the same time 'sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings.' The words, 'before the Lord,' in these passages, as in many others, may and probably do mean 'before the ark of God.' With the ark went the priests, by whom, according to the law, the sacrifices would be offered. In this case the word 'peace-offerings' is expressly added after sacrifices. In other cases, therefore, when 'sacrifices' stands alone, we are not at liberty, without evidence, to regard them as priestly or atoning offerings. The word may then be used in its popular meaning for festive victims. Although the offerings are said to have been sacrificed by the people, the duty was really discharged by the priests, as representing the nation. Sometimes kings are said to offer the sacrifices which they command the priests

to offer ; but this is a manner of speaking common to all languages and nations.<sup>1</sup> And had regard been paid to the ordinary use of words, the history of these times would not have been deluged with a flood of assertions in our day, which threatens to sweep away all landmarks of the past.

For several days the rejoicings of the triumphant army continued. It was the season of Pentecost, the time of wheat harvest, the beginning of the hot autumn of Palestine, when for weeks and months together the blue of the heavens is never spotted by a cloud to shield the earth from the sun's heat, or to refresh its fields with rain. The national joy at Gilgal was tempered by the religious awe of that festival. A nation was again breathing the breath of health after its deliverance from Ammon. It was beginning to know and to use its own strength.

Before the assembly broke up, Samuel addressed the people. It was his leave-taking as their ruler and governor. Henceforth the reins of power should be in the hands of the young king. From childhood, he said, he had walked before them and their fathers. Old age and grey hairs had come upon him. But long as his administration had been, he could hold up his hands before them, and appeal to them to bear out his words, when he denied that they had ever been stained by bribe or by violence. With one voice they bore witness to the purity of his government. It was hard to rule from youth to old age, and then to be told, we are weary with your government, and wish a better. Samuel felt this apparent unkindness. But he mistook the people's feelings. Dissatisfaction with him was not their reason for asking a king. A feeling of their own weakness, a distrust of their power to keep together as a nation without a visible head, were the real

<sup>1</sup> David (1 Chron. xxi. 26, 28) and Solomon (2 Chron. i. 6, vii. 4-7) are said to have sacrificed ; but the meaning is, they commanded sacrifices to be offered, as we find distinctly stated in the case of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxix. 21, 24).

grounds of their desire for a change of government. Samuel now felt the force of these reasons. Still the distrust was sinful, because it sprang from disbelief in Jehovah's presence among them. Accordingly the prophet warned them of the danger of this disbelief. It nearly brought the nation to ruin in past generations, when Gideon, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel were all raised up to free them from foreign oppression. The arm of the Almighty had shielded them on these occasions. When they heard of the preparations of Nahash, and saw his armies approaching, confidence in their heavenly King forsook them, and they demanded a visible head. To bring home to them their own and the inherited sins of many generations, the prophet, pointing to the cloudless heavens overhead, reminded them of the season of the year, the time, as they all knew, when thunder and rain were unknown in Palestine—'I will call unto the Lord,' he said, 'and He shall send thunder and rain.' In answer to his prayer as well as in proof of his truthfulness, a thunderstorm bursting over the camp of Israel terrified the people. They besought the prophet to pray for them that they might not die, and specially that their sin in asking a king might be forgiven. As the sun broke out from behind the storm clouds, so Samuel's favour was secured by this repentance of the Hebrews. 'I will teach you the good and the right way,' he said; 'only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.' With this mingled encouragement and warning, the national gathering broke up.

When Samuel in his leave-taking says, 'The Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies,' the word Samuel is regarded with suspicion, as an indication of the unreality of the speech. Elsewhere in it he repeatedly uses *I*: why should he not follow the same usage here, and say, Bedan, and Jephthah, and *me*? There is only one answer to that

question. He did not ask our advice. He took his own way. We may think or speak as we please about it; but he was the best judge in his own cause. And there was a sufficient reason for him doing as he did. The speech he delivered is full of words and thoughts from Deuteronomy. Without a dissentient voice, all writers agree in regarding it as entirely borrowed from, or as showing large indebtedness to, that book. But Deuteronomy exhibits Moses speaking, now in the third person, and again in the first. He changes from the one to the other without reason and without intimation. Samuel does the same thing in this short speech of leave-taking. If Moses thus spoke in a great speech, to which Samuel's brief leave-taking was indebted for words and thoughts, it may also be the source of Samuel's mixing up of the third and first persons. As Moses did not always say *me* or *I* when he spoke of himself, but *Moses*; so, in like circumstances, Samuel, copying this grand model, said *Samuel*, where, to our way of thinking, it would have sounded better had he said *me*. Allow indebtedness to Deuteronomy, and many more difficulties besides this will be found blunders on our part, not difficulties in the history.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

(1 SAM. xiii., xiv.—THE SPRINGTIME, ABOUT 1075 B.C.)

FOR many years after the overthrow of Nahash, the history of Israel is almost a blank. Only two points have been touched on by the sacred writer, and these very briefly. The first of them is the selection by Saul of three thousand chosen men to form his bodyguard. Although these troops were raised in the second year of his reign, their prowess furnished the historian with no deeds worth recording till long after. They were stationed at Gibeah, ready to take the field when plundering bands broke across the frontier, or to become a centre round which the national militia might rally, should attempts be made by large armies to invade the country. Twice were the 'three thousand chosen men,' as we find them called, suddenly summoned to follow the king in pursuit of David. And once were they marched in greater haste to the western border of Judah to beat back a raid of the Philistines. It is necessary to bear in mind these sudden calls on the services of 'the three thousand.' Even when the fact of a summons to repel invasion is not expressly mentioned, it may have to be supplied as a link in the chain of events. The reason for calling this bodyguard 'chosen men of Israel' is briefly stated: 'When Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him unto him.'

The chronology of this part of the history cannot even be groped after. Precise details are wanting. The nearest approach to precision is the verse which makes 'Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son



of Eli, (who was) the Lord's priest in Shiloh,' Saul's companion during the campaign (1 Sam. xiv. 3). But, a few years after, the high priest is Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub (1 Sam. xxii. 9), whose son, Abiathar, since he exercised the priest's office, must have been over thirty years of age. Nothing can be inferred from these details regarding the other point on which the historian has touched—the conquest of Southern Palestine by the Philistines. When the body-guard of Saul is first mentioned, two thousand of them are stationed with the king in Michmash and in Mount Bethel, while his son Jonathan holds the district of Gibeah with the remaining thousand. A deep and dangerous ravine, running east and west for many miles, lay between the two divisions. The rest of the Hebrew militia were sent home, 'every man to his tent.' Evidently the country was at peace, or was only expecting invasion, and taking measures to repel an enemy. But without a word of warning of any change having taken place, the next few lines in the history discover a Philistine garrison in possession of the district previously held by Hebrew troops, Saul's soldiers and people crushed and disarmed, and a great army of invaders on the march to the highlands of Benjamin. The Philistines were masters of the pass of Beth-horon, leading from the shores of the Mediterranean to Bethel, and thence to the Jordan. They had garrisons also in Geba and Michmash, two strongholds which gave them complete command of the ravine. Besides holding this great pathway into the heart of Canaan, they were also able to enforce a general disarming of the Hebrew people. And so thoroughly was this done, that swords and spears became almost unknown in the land. Axes, spades, ox-goads, shares and coulter of ploughs, all of which were required by the peasantry, could only be sharpened or repaired in the villages of Philistia, for the forge and the art of the smith were forbidden to the Hebrews. Here and there, throughout the country, some had hidden away files, which served for

sharpening the implements of the husbandmen. Even Saul's own bodyguard had been disarmed by the oppressors. The three thousand chosen men probably remained in attendance on the king during this time of national disgrace. But they were either unarmed altogether, or could find no better equipment than rude bows, strong clubs, and ox-goads. Saul and Jonathan alone could boast of a sword. Peace had evidently been purchased for Israel at a heavy price. The oppressor ruled in every village, blew out every forge, carried away every weapon of war, and plundered the people at his will. Freedom was dead in the Hebrew land. Never in all its history had the spirit of the nation been so crushed. No period of bondage during the time of the Judges was more galling—not even the days of Deborah, of which she sang: 'Then were the gates besieged: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?'

A crushing of a whole nation, so complete as is implied in this state of dependence on the enemy, could not have been the result of subjection for a year or two. As in Deborah's time, it meant fifteen or twenty years of grinding bondage. Manifestly Saul was then but a tributary prince. The skill and daring which he displayed in rescuing Jabesh Gilead, at the beginning of his reign, made him a foe whom neighbouring nations could not despise. Apparently the Philistines, determined to meet this new danger before it became too formidable, had entered the country in force, and reduced it to subjection. Their conquest was most thorough. Nor was the disarming of the people the only proof of their success. Many of the Hebrews were serving in the armies of the conqueror. And when the war of independence broke out, a part of the invading force, sent to trample down the revolt by rapine and slaughter, was drawn from the Hebrews themselves. Judging by what has often happened in like circumstances elsewhere, we see a nation divided into two parties. One of them, believing all attempts to throw off the yoke useless, was disposed to turn

compliance with the humours of their conquerors into a source of profit for themselves ; while the other, although submitting for a season, was only waiting for an opportunity to regain their freedom. But the spirit of the Hebrews generally was broken by years of oppression. There were pages of the history at that time which no true patriot could read or write without blushing. Like the history of similar periods of bondage in the book of Judges, they are, so to speak, torn out of the record ; while the story of the deliverance is written at full length, with a pen which seems to betray its joy in almost every word.

The outbreak of national spirit, which led to the overthrow of Nahash, alarmed the Philistines, and prompted them to these strong measures. But a high-spirited king like Saul, proud of a triumph so complete as the defeat of Ammon, did not abandon his crown without a lengthened struggle. He was driven to the hills ; his men were frightened and scattered ; even his chosen bodyguard melted away to a fifth of its numbers. The armoury of warlike weapons, which the flight of Ammon left to be picked off the field of battle by the Hebrews, was wrested from them ; neither spear nor shield nor sword was seen in a soldier's or a captain's hand. This record of disgrace is not a record of one, or two, or five, but of many years' oppression. It covered pages in the history of the Hebrew race, so black with dishonour that a writer may well be excused if he has crowded the sorrows of twenty years into the compass of as many lines. By striking out this period of shame, the length of Saul's reign is reduced by modern authors from about forty years to fewer than twenty.

As the weary season of bondage came to an end, whispers of approaching deliverance arose in Israel. Whether it were that Saul had resolved to strike a blow for freedom, or that Samuel had received warning of the crisis which was at hand ; or, as recent discoveries give ground for believing, that the Philistines were entangled in other wars, there was clearly an

unwonted stirring among the down-trodden Hebrews. The spring of the year was chosen for revolt. The people could then be gathered from all quarters—‘at an appointed season,’ for so the words run in the history—without exciting the suspicions of their conquerors. The place of meeting was Gilgal, near Jericho, which was comparatively safe against attack. Sheltered from the Philistines by a screen of hills and of difficult passes, Hebrew patriots could gather there for consultation or war. Samuel had intimated his intention of being present, but he kept away from the meeting for seven days. The assembly may have been the annual feast of the passover, observed by stealth in a place made sacred by old associations. At Gilgal this festival was observed for the first time in Palestine, a few days after the crossing of the Jordan under Joshua. ‘The children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho’ (Josh. v. 10). Shiloh became the place of celebration after Joshua’s time. When the curse of desolation fell on that city, no other was chosen for the central altar and the scene of national festivals. King and people may have fallen back on the recorded precedent of Gilgal as a place of celebration, but if such was the case, Samuel did not sanction it by his presence. Twice we find him delaying ‘seven days’ before he went down to join the king at Gilgal. He then came to a meeting of the people for consultation in trying times. Another explanation of this waiting for seven days is possible. When Moses set his brother apart for the priesthood, he forbade him ‘to go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation seven days’ (Lev. viii. 33). The days of consecration were spent in keeping ‘the charge of the Lord day and night.’ Aaron waited precisely as Saul was told to do. What the first high priest did at his solemn setting apart by a prophet, Samuel, that prophet’s successor, might well lay on the first king of the nation at two turning points in its history. It seems as if Samuel said to Saul, ‘Wait, and meditate on your

high charge for seven days, before you begin to act.' Be that as it may, the crisis had arisen in Israel's history ; great events were about to happen, and Samuel came with a definite purpose—to offer not *a* burnt-offering, as the English version puts it, but *the* burnt-offering. Mention is made of this sacrifice four times as 'the burnt-offering,' a special victim chosen for a special purpose (Num. xxviii. 19).

Before the gathering took place at Gilgal, the signal for war was given by Jonathan, the son of Saul, then a young man apparently above twenty years of age. By means now unknown, and with a force which it would be rash to identify with the thousand men whom he is found commanding a line or two before, he surprised the Philistine garrison of Geba, a mountain fastness on the south side of the pass of Beth-horon. The stronghold which he thus gained gave its occupants a view of all hostile movements on the north side of the pass, and was of inestimable value in the operations which soon followed. Tidings of the capture spread far and near. The trumpet was blown throughout the whole land, summoning the Hebrews to obey their rightful sovereign ; not the priestly trumpet of the wilderness, which we shall find reappearing at a later period, but the soldier's trumpet of battle. And the terms of the proclamation were the same as Israel had been accustomed to from their arrival at Sinai, after their escape from Egypt. 'Hear my voice,' was the command first uttered from Sinai ; 'Let the Hebrews hear,' was the proclamation published throughout the land by Saul. 'To hear' had a well-understood meaning among the people from ancient times. It ran as a living nerve through their whole literature ; the string, on which the events of history are threaded, is often of the thinness of gossamer, while it has the strength of steel. But the loss of Geba also called the Philistines to arms. Nor did they scruple to utter threats of vengeance in the hearing of many Hebrews then in the country, peasants perhaps getting their implements of hus-

bandry repaired, or traitors receiving orders from their masters. Word was soon carried to the patriot camp that 'Israel was had in abomination of the Philistines.' The haughtiness of conquerors was arrayed against the despondency of an ill-equipped army of patriots, whose crushed hearts preferred flight to fighting. An immense host of Philistines and their allies speedily marched by the pass of Beth-horon to the rebellious uplands of Benjamin. Besides an uncounted body of foot soldiers, there were thirty thousand Recheb and six thousand horse. By the Recheb are commonly understood chariots.<sup>1</sup> But that does not appear to be the meaning of the word, any more than thirty thousand artillery in a modern army would signify thirty thousand pieces of cannon. The men who formed the Recheb, or chariot force, numbered thirty thousand, and were the flower of the army. But if the warrior and charioteer and the supports be all taken count of, the force of chariots may be reduced to four or five thousand at the most, a number sufficiently large for an army operating on a plain, but most dangerous when the field of war was among the hills. According to the Assyrian annals, it was a number which was sometimes exceeded by the petty princes of Syria, when banded together to fight for their freedom.

The men of Israel assembled in Gilgal at the 'set time,' but it was soon seen that few of them were worthy to fight the battles of freedom. A more formidable foe than Midian had mastered the land of the Hebrews; a smaller handful than even Gideon's three hundred was destined to humble the enemy's pride. Samuel was not present in the Hebrew camp during the seven days of the feast, as the assembly may reasonably be called. As day after day passed, and brought fuller tidings of the advance of the invaders, men slunk from following their king. Without shame they hid themselves in caves and thickets, or among the rocky wastes of mountains

<sup>1</sup> Those who take the word in this sense suspect a copyist's error in the number.

which, in a former age, furnished a refuge to the spies, whom Rahab sent out of Jericho in safety. Others fled to the lofty watch-towers, or found at once a dwelling and a safe retreat in the sepulchres hollowed out on the rock-faces of desolate valleys. But a greater danger threatened the Hebrew army. The soldiers lost heart. Many of them, despairing of their country, crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and the more distant region of Gilead. Safety had been secured to these districts by the defeat of Nahash, from which Ammon had not yet recovered, while the Jordan was a barrier which the Philistines might not cross. Those who remained with Saul 'followed him, trembling' for the future. A more mournful sight could not be witnessed than a great nation, divided into fugitives and tremblers in presence of a powerful enemy. Even Saul himself belonged to the tremblers.

For seven days Saul waited at Gilgal, expecting Samuel to join him at the end of that time. 'A seven days,' or a week, is a form of words which occurs repeatedly in the Pentateuch, and in the books of Samuel. In the former, it is frequently used of the passover feast; in the latter, it twice appears as a set or solemn time. Here it fell in the spring, 'at the time when kings go forth to battle.' The people assembled in great force. The burnt-offering and peace-offerings were to be sacrificed. The ark and the high priest, Ahiah, were present in the camp; and as Saul's first altar was built some time afterwards, there was either an altar permanently at the place, or, what is more probable, the brazen altar of the wilderness had been brought to Gilgal from Nob by Ahiah and his attendant Levites. Everything points to the great feast of passover as the occasion seized by Saul for inspiring his people with warlike ardour. The place reminded them of some of the greatest deeds of ancient days: the coming from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan, the overthrow of Moab by Ehud. The cheering presence of the ark, which had often led Joshua to victory from the same spot, must not be overlooked. Because the Greek translator

bungled his work in a passage relating to the ark in this story, as he bungled it in many other passages, several writers refuse to allow the presence of the ark in the camp. Not observing the parenthetic clause in the Hebrew, and not knowing the usage of the language, he attempted to improve a clear narrative by altering 'ark' into 'ephod.' The words, literally rendered, are, 'And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring near the ark of God (for the ark of God was present in that day) and the children of Israel.' Two things were brought near to Saul—the ark and the people—a form of words precisely the same as Elijah used at his great sacrifice on Carmel two centuries later. 'Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me.' The presence of the ark, therefore, cannot be denied. In short, nothing was left undone which seemed fitted to inspire men with courage in desperate times.

When Saul saw the people melting away, and heard from Geba of the enemy's approach, his feverish impatience drove him to usurp the place and office of Samuel. 'The burnt-offering,' which no one was to sacrifice till Samuel came, had been ready for some time. Saul believed there was virtue in the mere offering. Already had the invaders reached the summit of the pass at Michmash. If he delayed longer, they might descend on the few hundreds who still clung to their king, surprise them before the victim could be offered, and deprive him of the influence which he evidently thought the sacrifice could of itself procure for him with God. The following day proved the correctness of this forecast of the enemy's plans. But, ignorant of the prophet's design in delaying, and urged on by rash views, he would wait no longer for Samuel. 'Bring near to me the burnt-offering and the peace-offerings,' he said to the attendants of the high priest. And he ordered Ahiah to proceed with the sacrifice. According to a form of words common in all tongues, he is said to have done himself what he gave orders for another to do. 'I forced myself and offered the burnt-offering,' are not



words which necessarily imply a usurpation of the priest's office by Saul, but they imply a violation of the command laid on him to wait for Samuel. While the sacrifice was still in progress, messengers arrived with news of the prophet's approach. Saul went forth from the camp to meet him. But Samuel had seen the smoke of the burnt-offering as he descended the higher ground to the plains of Gilgal. And there came to him also a message from heaven, exactly as, at an earlier time, a message came to him on his journey to prepare him for his first meeting with Saul. But the second message was unlike the first. 'What art thou doing?' he asked. Saul is full of excuses, a feature of his character which comes out with equal prominence afterwards. The melting away of the people, the failure of the prophet to keep his appointment, the advance of the enemy are all mentioned. 'God's favour I have not propitiated,' he said, 'the enemy will be upon me; I did violence to my own feelings that I might offer the burnt-offering.' Every one was to blame but the king. He could not understand that, as the force of Gideon was weeded out till it numbered only three hundred men, so it was his duty to let the weeding out of his followers proceed till it pleased the prophet to come to his help. Gideon was a man of little faith, as any one would have been in similar circumstances. Saul had shown himself to be a man of no faith at all, but of high presumption. He was tried and found wanting. He was unfit to be the captain of the chosen people. 'Thou hast done foolishly,' Samuel said, without regarding his excuses; 'thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not stand; the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.' The words of Samuel breathe the

spirit of the lawgiver in Deuteronomy. They do more. They echo, if they do not quote, these very words. So clear is this relation of the one to the other, that the only way of escape from the difficulties in which it involves the newest school of critics, is by resorting to the device of pronouncing these words an interpolation in an ancient narrative, made by an unknown reviser four or five centuries after Samuel was dead. We may well discard this idea as destructive, not of one part of the history, but of the whole.

Saul received neither light nor guidance from Samuel. Both of them immediately withdrew from Gilgal to the stronghold of Geba. The place was safer from attack than Gilgal, and gave a clear prospect of the movements of the enemy, whose forces were now filling the country beyond the ravine. Evidently Samuel had a plan in his mind when he delayed his visit to Gilgal, and when he removed from Gilgal to Geba. Another Gideon was destined to fight for Israel, but with help far inferior to the three hundred men he commanded. A great deliverance was at hand; but a great opportunity was for ever lost by King Saul. The scene that lay spread out before the eyes of Saul's soldiers in Geba filled them with alarm. An outpost of the invaders had seized Michmash, right in their front. The pass below was thus in the enemy's power. Three bodies of spoilers were seen issuing from the camp. Their course could be traced by the smoke of burning homesteads or ripe barley crops. One body went westward, another north-east, and a third 'turned the way of the border which looketh on the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.' It was the third detachment which would have fallen on Saul or intercepted him, had he been much later in escaping to the high lands. Of these eight Hebrew words, four or five suggest words and things already well known in Hebrew history. 'The boundary' refers us to the northern boundary of Benjamin described in the book of Joshua. And 'the boundary which looketh on' is the form of words, in

which Balaam's position is twice described, 'the top of Pisgah, which looketh on the face of Jeshimon.' The whole story in the book of Samuel is a reflection of words and things written long before by Hebrew pens, and read in Hebrew households.

There was a movement among the Philistines who formed the garrison of Michmash which seems to have escaped the eyes of all but Jonathan. He was watching them closely. Evidently they were somewhat uneasy about the company of spoilers, who had gone down the ravine towards the wilderness of Jordan. 'They went out to the pass of Michmash' to have a better view. Night fell upon the disheartened patriots, the spoilers, the garrison of Michmash, and the Philistine camp. Saul, with six hundred of his bodyguard, and Ahiah the high priest, had not trusted themselves in Geba. They were in the neighbourhood, prepared apparently for flight if the enemy forced their way across the pass. Saul himself was sheltered, at the extreme end of the region called Gibeah, 'under the pomegranate tree,' in a precipitous place called 'Migron.' The exactitude of the description proves the future fame of the spot. Samuel appears to have left the camp. But if we knew the whole story, we might be able to trace his hand in the brave deed which entirely altered the complexion of affairs on the following morning. Before daybreak Jonathan proposed to his armour-bearer to cross over from Geba to the garrison of Michmash, and challenge them to an equal combat. Had he revealed his plan to Saul, he would have been hampered by orders, or would have been forbidden to make the attempt. Without making known their design, the two young men slipped away from the Hebrew camp to undertake a deed of daring that has seldom been paralleled in the history of any nation.

At the crossing-place of the ravine where the road, such as it was, ran from Geba to Michmash, were two rocks, rising like giant pillars, one on each side of the pass. The northern

rock at Michmash was named Bozez (shining), from the brilliance with which its smooth face reflected the rays of the southern sun. The rock on the Geba or southern side was called Seneh. At one time it was thought to have been so named from its tooth-like shape. But that idea has been abandoned, as Seneh can only be got to mean a tooth by doing violence to the letters of the name. There is another and a better meaning of the word, which also helps to throw light on the events that followed. Seneh in Hebrew is a bush; it is especially used of the bush which Moses saw burning and not consumed. Apparently, the rock in front of Geba got its name from the bush with which it was partly covered. But the word suggested high thoughts to Jonathan during the stillness of that night of waiting. With irresistible force it reminded the prince of 'the goodwill of him that dwelt in Seneh, or the bush.' It recalled the marvellous work of one man in freeing the nation from bondage four centuries before. It suggested the hope of a like deliverance again. Seneh was on the Hebrews' side of the pass. And because of its peculiarly suggestive name, the two rocks are probably mentioned in the history (Deut. xxxiii. 16).

'There is no restraint to the Lord,' said the prince to his armour-bearer, 'to save by many or by few.' The proverb, as it apparently was, had seized hold of the prince's mind with a power that seemed to betoken a great fulfilment. He inspired the armour-bearer with the hopes he felt himself: 'Do all that is in thine heart; turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart.' They arranged their plans. If the enemy had the courage to come down the steep hill-face, with the view of forcing a passage, as Jonathan thought they intended, the two Hebrews were to abide their coming on the higher ground or in the bottom of the valley. But if they challenged the Hebrews to equal combat on their own side of the pass, Jonathan and his armour-bearer were then to climb the rock, and put their trust in God for the rest. The invita-

tion to come up was to be 'the sign' which should determine their course. Hebrews were taught in their popular law-book to look for 'signs' to guide them in life. Samuel, it will be remembered, followed this teaching, and may have suggested it to Jonathan. It was also a feature of the prince's character thus to arrange for alternative courses of action. At a later period, the same way of looking at two possibilities will be seen in his dealings with David. The writer of the history in Samuel had a keen insight into such peculiarities of character.

When the two Hebrews neared the bottom of the pass, they discovered themselves to the men of the garrison above. It was early morning; their numbers could not be known. But as soon as they were seen, the guards above called to each other: 'Behold, Hebrews coming forth from holes in the rocks, where they hid themselves.' When challenged by the two youths, they replied by inviting them to come up: 'We shall make you know something,' they said. Accepting 'the sign,' Jonathan climbed the rocky slope as best he could, 'on his hands and his feet.' His armour-bearer followed. It was fifteen or twenty minutes of hard work. A narrow ledge at the top, well known, it may be, to the prince, seems to have made the beginning of the fray more even for the wearied climbers than it could otherwise have been. At first it was single combat; when a Philistine fell, the armour-bearer completed with an ox-goad what Jonathan had commenced with the sword. Every fresh victory emboldened the young men, and struck terror into the enemy. Soon a score of Philistines lay dead on a narrow stretch of ground. The rest of the outpost took to flight. The spoilers, returning up the pass from the direction of Gilgal, appear to have heard the uproar or seen the flight of their comrades, and were themselves seized with terror. Their retreat was cut off. As the fugitives from the first slaughter burst into the Philistine camp, they spread alarming tidings of defeat at the hands of one Hebrew

champion. Another Samson had arisen to avenge his country; a worse slaughter than any he caused might be looked for amid the rocky defiles of Beth-horon. An earthquake happening at the same time alarmed them still more. The garrison was running away; the spoilers were running; no one could get or give exact information. A sleeping host, plunged in careless security, was awaking to find its outposts defeated and death hastening to its tent-doors. Want of discipline produced its usual fruits. The whole army of the invaders fled before two young men. Six thousand horses, thirty thousand Rechab, an uncounted mass of foot were struggling with each other, and trampling one another down to get away in safety from two youths, wearied with a steep climb and a battle against terrible odds. But when the flight once began there was no stopping of it. Imagination lent it wings: every friend became a foe.

As the morning light grew stronger, the sentinels of Saul in Gibeah saw the disorder in the enemy's camp. Their eyes were sharpened by the noise of battle, which had already reached their ears. A scene of wildest confusion was passing before their view, to them inexplicable confusion. They saw no fighting with a foe, no pursuit by a victor; the enemy was rapidly moving off the ground, one beating another down. Saul was informed of the confusion among the invaders. He could not make out whether it was a surprise of the enemy by his own people, or a trap laid to entice him and his handful of men across the ravine. His first step was that of a cautious soldier. By numbering his men, he ascertained that Jonathan and his armour-bearer alone were wanting. It was therefore a surprise, not a trap. His next step was equally wise. He summoned the high priest with the ark to ask counsel for king and people. 'Bring near the ark of God and the children of Israel,' he said. Ahiah was dressed in his sacred robes; the people were standing round; and Saul was putting the questions for decision by the sacred lot. While he was

speaking, the noises of a lost battle rose clearer on the morning air; and the scenes of confusion became plainer to the spectators round the ark. Ahiah was putting his hand into the pocket of the breastplate. A minute more, and the counsel of Heaven would have been known. But Saul interfered. 'Withdraw thine hand,' he cried; and the counsel desired was not got. A feverish excitement had seized the king, depriving him for the moment of the calmness of judgment necessary in a great crisis. But that idea is not a sufficient explanation of his rashness. There is another, and perhaps a better. Samuel had evidently left Geba, in anger at the presumption of the king. A great triumph had been gained, and was proceeding beneath Saul's eyes, but it brought no glory to him. He had been told a day or two days before, that, while he himself was rejected, another captain had been chosen over the Lord's people. Reasoning on these grounds, Saul may have feared the threats of Samuel were working themselves out into facts. His fancy may have seen the new captain over the people already taking the command, routing the foe, and putting himself at the head of the nation. If, as Saul had reason to think, the Urim and Thummim of the high priest should refuse him light and guidance before the people, his rejection by Jehovah might become public talk. 'Withdraw thine hand,' he cried, lest no answer should be given. 'The noise and the flight' are answer enough, he seems to have said to his followers, who may have been as eager to pursue the enemy, as he was to arrest the hand of Ahiah. But there were those present who saw the insult offered to the majesty of Jehovah.

As Saul lay on the south side of the pass, and was thus between the enemy and their own land, short cuts across the hills would soon bring him on their flank or rear. His soldiers seem to have hurried forward with loud shouts, which would both strike more terror into the fugitives, and summon the Hebrews from the hiding-places to which they had fled. But a worse disaster befell the enemy. A body of Hebrews,

who had joined them in prosperity, deserted them in adversity. As soon as they saw their own king and people threatening the fugitives, they made their peace with them by falling on their former friends—a lesson of caution not forgotten by the invaders. There was thus civil war among the Philistines. No one knew who was friend and who was foe. When the pursuers at length came up with the enemy, the scene reminded them of the promise which they had been accustomed to read in their sacred books, ‘The Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a *mighty destruction*’ (Deut. vii. 23). ‘With a *very mighty destruction*,’ or confusion, for so the narrative in Samuel reads, was the pass found to be blocked that morning. From Ephraim on the north, from Benjamin on the south, every commanding point was seized by mountaineers, who, as in later days, could hurl rocks down on the struggling crowd below. The shouts of pursuers increased the terrors of fugitives. For four or five miles the pursuit was urged by the Hebrew king, till Bethaven was reached. Of the greatness of the victory there could then be no doubt. Every foot of the road showed inviting proofs of its completeness, in arms thrown away, spoils abandoned, cattle and sheep deserted, men dead or dying. Saul was afraid of the temptations which he saw his unarmed and hungry soldiers exposed to. The day before he had left his camp to ‘bless’ or welcome Samuel. Now, with strange inconsistency, he has left his camp to reap the fruits of a victory which he had not won, and to curse the soldiers who might have made it complete. With a loud voice, so that all the little band of Hebrews heard the words, Saul exclaimed, ‘Cursed be the man that eateth food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies.’ A curse so rashly uttered was productive of most serious consequences to the king and his family. The two youths, who gained the victory, had not joined Saul when the words were spoken. They knew nothing about the prohibition. Meanwhile the day was



advancing; the sun was growing hot, entailing thirst and faintness upon the pursuers. Mile after mile they hastened on through a friendly country, and along roads covered with abandoned spoils; but the fainting Hebrews dared not partake of the refreshment provided for them by Heaven's own hands. In passing through a forest on the line of the enemy's flight, honey was seen flowing from the comb so copiously, that every one could have helped himself without delaying the advance. Streams of honey, such as the soldiers beheld, proved the heat of the day and the weariness of the chase. Jonathan, who had by this time joined the main body, lifted some of it to his burning lips. A fresh life blazed in his very eyes. The honey, which was forbidden in any offering made by fire (Lev. ii. 11), was a fatal indulgence in this sacrifice of enemies, devoted to utter destruction in the king's vow. One of the soldiers, seeing the prince dip the end of a spear, with which he had armed himself, into a honeycomb, told him of the curse uttered by the king. A rash word fell from Jonathan when he heard what Saul had done. 'My father hath troubled the land,' the same word which Joshua applied to Achan when he asked him, 'Why hast thou troubled us?' and which Ahab in his anger applied to Elijah, 'Troubler of Israel, art thou here?' The prince regretted his language, for he proceeded to explain, how that ill-advised curse lessened the splendour of the triumph by the faintness which want of food caused to the pursuers.

From Bethaven the tide of war rolled all day westward to Aijalon, a distance of twelve or thirteen miles. It was a weary chase for fasting men. When word was passed to encamp for the night, and freedom was given to partake of food, impatience led the soldiers to break one of the most solemn laws in all the Hebrew ritual. Without waiting till the blood had been drained from the sheep and oxen, slain for their evening meal, some cut up the animals and dressed the pieces before camp-fires kindled by their comrades.

Several of the priests, alarmed at this breach of the law, appear to have called Saul's attention to what was going on. In all haste he bade them disperse themselves throughout the camp, and order every man to bring the cattle to a large stone or perhaps cairn, which his attendants had rolled together. Order was thus taken with these breakers of the law. They had to wait their turn, while the sheep and the oxen were slain or sacrificed in presence of the king and priest. The victory, for which thanks were due, the victims, and the stone or cairn, seem to have put it into Saul's mind that, in token of his gratitude, he should convert this slaughter-table into an altar, or, at least, should call it by that name. Our translators have overlooked the fact of the stone or cairn and the altar being one and the same. 'And Saul built an altar to Jehovah; it (the stone or cairn) he began to build—an altar to Jehovah.' There is not ground for regarding the stone, which was thus converted into an altar, as a place of priestly sacrifice. The blood, which was there poured out, made it an altar according to the definition of a popular sacrifice. And it was also a lasting memorial of the great deliverance wrought that day, a monumental cairn, different from an idolatrous pillar, and perhaps the same as the 'hand' or 'pointer' which Saul is known to have erected elsewhere in gratitude for victory. As soon as the army should be refreshed with food and sleep, Saul proposed to descend from the heights on which they were encamped, and attack the enemy before morning. If the 'seven days' were really the passover week, the assailants would be guided in their march by the moon, which rose at an early hour in the morning, and would give them light till day broke. Saul's plan was thus full of promise. The Philistines had reached a broad valley running towards Ekron, and, as they were extricated from the straits and rocks of the hills, considered themselves safe. Saul's officers entered heartily into his plans. But the high priest urged them to ask counsel of God before venturing on an attack: 'Let us

draw near hither unto God,' he said, meaning by 'hither,' apparently, to the altar and the ark (1 Sam. x. 22). His advice was taken. But the oracle gave neither 'yes' nor 'no,' when the questions asked by Saul were put, 'Shall I go down after the Philistines? Wilt Thou deliver them into the hand of Israel?' The brightness of the triumph gained was blurred by sin somewhere; an opportunity which might never again recur was slipping from Saul's grasp. Evidently he was not to be any more the deliverer of the chosen people.

Vexed at the failure of a plan which bade so fair for success, Saul, instead of seeing in himself the cause of the failure, hoped to discover it elsewhere. Exhorting the chiefs present to assist him in finding out the sinner, whoever he might be, and denouncing death as his due, Saul divided his little army into two bands, himself and Jonathan forming one, and the rest of the soldiers another. His captains heard him in silence. To most of them death in battle was part of a soldier's lot, from which they would not shrink; but to risk life on the uncertainty of the lot, and as the forfeit due to a broken vow, filled them with alarm. Could they have read each other's faces by the dim light of the camp-fires, no one would have had reason to rally another on his frightened looks. 'Not one of all the people answered' to the threat of death. 'Do what seemeth good unto thee,' was their reply about the taking of the lot.<sup>1</sup> With all solemnity the king besought Jehovah 'to give perfection' in a matter so serious. It was soon decided. The people escaped. Saul was terribly in earnest now. According to his way of taking the lot, the sin lay with him or his son. 'Let the lots fall between me and between Jonathan my son,' he said; and Jonathan was taken. His father asked him what he had done. 'I did certainly taste with the end of the spear which was in my

<sup>1</sup> The high priest was not asked to decide by Urim and Thummim. Neither *yes* nor *no* might have been the result as before. With the ordinary lot a decision one way or the other was inevitable.

hand a little honey. Here I am, ready to die.' 'God do so to me and more also,' replied the king; 'but, Jonathan, thou shalt surely die.' With the calmness of a hero, the prince stood prepared for death. In the morning he risked his life in an enterprise which covered him with honour and saved his country from bondage. In the evening he found himself condemned as the sinner whose wrong-doing had marred the great deliverance which he and his armour-bearer had wrought. A zeal bordering on madness, inflamed, too, by the feeling that the fault was wholly his own, was driving the king to take his son's life. Jonathan was ready to lay it down. But the common-sense of the army revolted against a deed so dreadful as the slaying of a victim who was not only innocent, but was also the Gideon of his day. Murmurs arose in the army. A life so precious to a people, casting away the chains of a weary bondage, should not be thus lightly taken. An instinct stronger than reason told the people that the prince was not the sinner, because of whom an oracle had been refused. The first sacrifice offered on this first altar built by Saul was to be his own son! 'There shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground,' the soldiers say, 'for he hath been a fellow-worker with God this day.' And despite the terrible earnestness of the king, they rescued the prince from death.

Though the people thus saved Jonathan from death, nothing could ever efface from his mind the remembrance of that moment of danger. Perhaps, too, he feared—and feared till the fear became a settled belief—that a father's rash vow had blighted his hopes of the kingdom. So far as a vow went, Jonathan was dead in law from that moment. The sun of his renown was under an eclipse, and it might never again come forth. The effects of this chain of events on Saul may also be easily traced. He familiarized himself with the idea of a son's guilt and a son's death. His son had taken his place as champion of the nation at a time when Jehovah refused to

give Saul light or guidance. While the king was earnestly seeking Jehovah's honour, this champion of the people was crossing his plans and breaking the vow he uttered. His own family were turning against him. The idea which thus took root in his mind, seems never to have lost its hold during the rest of his life. It broadened out into unfounded suspicions and cruel deeds. It led to the murder of the priests of Nob, to repeated attempts on the life of David, and to the throwing of a spear at Jonathan himself. Saul had begun the downward course, which ended in madness and death.

Saul was not justified in thus appealing to the sacred lot as a means of discovering the sinner whose guilt had sealed the lips of Heaven. His own presumptuous act two or three days before, and his insult to the sacred oracle that very morning, rendered further search for a sinner unnecessary. No commission was given to him to destroy the invading army. Another had felt and had shown the faith which he neither felt nor showed. But notwithstanding these clear facts, he put himself in the position of God's avenger on the oppressors. And he presumed to play this part at a time when his interference was not desired. His help, according to his own view of things, seemed indispensable; his right to guide the flow of events seemed indisputable. Heaven was not needing his help, and did not respect his claim of right. It could dispense with his vow as it dispensed with his sword. But a second place in God's arrangements he was resolved not to take. Pride and presumption lured him on to his own ruin and the ruin of his family. Whether Jonathan were guilty or not, according to the way the law of the Hebrews was regarded in that age, need not be asked. But Saul had put himself out of court in a case so solemn. He was acting as both judge and plaintiff. When the high priest was within a minute or two of ascertaining God's will on Saul's enterprise that morning, the king stopped him because the thing was

clear in itself; confusion such as reigned in the enemy's host was warrant enough for attack, without waiting for God's direction. He had therefore no right to ask counsel in the evening, when he had refused to wait for it in the morning. A night assault on a panic-stricken enemy, still quivering with the excitement of a disastrous day, was not more dangerous than the morning's march. The beaten soldiers were weary after a flight of many miles; they were overpowered with sleep. If suddenly roused by fresh sounds of war, they would seek safety, not in resistance, but in a more headlong retreat. Saul's soldiers, on the other hand, were refreshed after their fatigue; they were inspired with the highest hopes; they would choose their own time for delivering the attack; and they were constantly receiving reinforcements of men who had not shared in the weariness of the previous day, and who longed to strike a blow for freedom. On every view of the case, the man who refused to wait for the high priest in the morning, had no call to listen to the high priest in the evening. All the mischief that happened lay at his own door. If the rashness of the morning were right, Saul could not expect an answer in the evening. If that rashness were wrong, still less could he expect an answer about a night attack. Saul's vow was perhaps the direct result of a feeling of guilt in his own heart. It may have been meant by him as an atonement for his rashness in stopping the high priest at the last stage of consultation. Jonathan's breach of law—if it was such—and the people's eating of the blood could not have happened, unless the vow had been thrown as a stumblingblock in their path. The rod of punishment fell, as it often does, not on the offender, in the first case at least, but on Jonathan, Saul's pride and hope. The first stroke blighted the life and prospects of the prince when they looked fairest to the view; the later and the heavier strokes fell on his father. Saul's rashness in acting as both judge and plaintiff in a cause which demanded him for

the accused, involved his brave son in a network of sorrow from which he never escaped.

The success of the Hebrews in this campaign revived the spirit of freedom among them. They had the wrongs of many a year of suffering to avenge on other nations. In the hour of Israel's weakness spoilers had ravaged all his borders. Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Syria had grown rich by plundering and enslaving the disheartened Hebrews. But day had at length broken on the long night of oppression. In a series of campaigns Saul led his people to battle against these neighbours. The terror which had weakened Israel now lay heavy on them. As oppressors of the chosen people, they are called wicked men; and the triumphs achieved over them by Saul are described by a word which refers to the overthrow of the unrighteous, 'Whithersoever he turned himself, he proved them unrighteous.' Thus early had Israel become accustomed to the idea, fully developed in later ages by the prophets, that whoever set himself against the chosen race was a sinner in God's sight, and would meet a sinner's fate. For four or five years, it may be, Saul was thus engaged in building up his throne by paying back to his neighbours these outstanding scores. On every side, from the far north to the deserts of the south, from Ammon on the east to the shores of the Great Sea on the west, success crowned his efforts. To maintain the freedom of his country and the dignity of his crown, he was now also able to support an army, of which his cousin Abner became commander-in-chief. And though the three thousand of the bodyguard only were actually kept under arms, steps seem to have been taken for training to war all the able-bodied men in the land.

Among the enemies whom Saul overcame at this time are mentioned the Amalekites: 'He gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.' This expedition is put along with the expeditions against Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Zobah. It is

the same expedition of which a full account is given in the following chapter. But the value of this anticipative mention of it is very great. By a device common to all writers, a series of events is sometimes mentioned by anticipation, before the writer proceeds to deliver his full narrative of the facts. A short-hand statement precedes; a detailed history follows. This is called in grammar *prolepsis* or *anticipation*. If a reader neglect to observe this rhetorical device, which indeed is often essential to a good record of events, he may regard as different two narratives, which form really only two accounts—the first short and the second detailed—of one and the same event. The author of the books of Samuel indulges sometimes in this grammatical device. He is forced to it by the nature and course of the story. In most cases the device is clearly seen by the reader, as in the passage under review. But if the reader miss the writer's manifest purpose in using a *prolepsis* or *anticipation* of the narrative, he will find himself involved in confusion, and may do the author grievous wrong. When we come to David's first appearance on the stage of history, we shall see the advantage of bearing this grammatical device in mind.



## CHAPTER IV.

### FINAL REJECTION OF SAUL.

(1 SAM. XV.)

THE threatening of Samuel, that the kingdom of Saul should not stand, remained a dead letter for several years. Perhaps it was forgotten in the tide of prosperity, which carried the Hebrews onward to freedom and honour. But the prediction, though seeming to sleep, again scared the king with its unwelcome waking. The threat of approaching ruin was renewed after an interval of years: in this, as in other cases, the scenes of Hebrew history are acted over again. Because judgment against an evil work did not come to pass speedily, Saul believed, or at least hoped, that it would never come at all.

After Saul had attended to what might be reckoned pressing calls on the resources of his kingdom, in vindicating its freedom against the stranger, he was reminded of other duties still undischarged. He was not a law to himself, like the kings of neighbouring nations. Nor had he merely to seek the greatest good of his people, as a wise ruler would do. He had, besides, to render obedience to the higher Power which drew him forth from obscurity and set him on the throne. The command lying on him especially as the king of Israel, was the command first given to the people on their arrival at Sinai four centuries before, 'Thou shalt obey the voice of Jehovah.' And the time at last arrived for putting forth its claims: 'Samuel said unto Saul, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt.

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.' This was the oath called *cherem*, or utter destruction: 'Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth,' it said (Deut. xx. 16). The command thus given by Samuel was connected with an attack made by a body of Amalekites or Bedouin on the Hebrews, in the neighbourhood of Sinai, about two months after the departure from Egypt. Though driven off by Joshua, they seem to have hung on the outskirts of the camp, and done what mischief they could to stragglers, to women and children, during the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness. The attack, in which they were beaten back, is recorded in an early part of the wilderness history; their hanging on the rear of the Hebrew camp and army, for the purpose of cutting off the feeble and the hindmost, is recorded at the close of the march towards Canaan (Ex. xvii. 14, 16; Deut. xxv. 17). The blood feud, which thus arose, continued throughout the following centuries. Amalek's robbers repeatedly wasted the farms of Judah. Twice did Moses record the hatefulness of these people's inhospitality to the fugitive strangers from Egypt. Twice also he recorded the punishment, which the children of the fugitives were ordered to inflict. It was an endless blood feud between two nations, but a feud countenanced by the Judge of all the earth.

At no other period since the conquest of Canaan could the Hebrews have undertaken this war. Joshua was too busy, and the people's work of conquest too heavy, to allow them to turn their thoughts to the Amalekites. After Joshua's death there was even less hope of punishment overtaking the freebooters. On two occasions, indeed, during the times of the Judges, Amalek was able to plunder the country of the Hebrews, once as the ally of Moab and again as the ally of Midian. For three hundred years after the conquest, Israel was helpless to undertake foreign wars. His strength was

spent in shaking off the yoke of strangers, which was soon cast again on his neck. In Saul's days the Hebrews began to see the advantages of acting together under one head. When the nation was then renewing its youth, awaking after a long sleep to a knowledge of its own might, the command came to Saul to pay back into Amalek's bosom the misdeeds as well of former ages as of his own. Obeying without delay 'the voice of the Lord,' he assembled his forces to the number of 210,000 men at a place called Telaim, perhaps the same as Telem, a town not far from Ziph, in the pastoral districts of Southern Judah. Of this large army the tribe of Judah furnished only ten thousand men, a singular circumstance when we consider its resources, and the ravages to which its position exposed it from the desert rovers. Other employment must have been found for the soldiers of Judah. Edomites and Philistines might both have fallen on that tribe, if the borders were left unguarded. The first place attacked by Saul was a town called Ir-Amalek (city of Amalek). Near it, and forming part of the defences, was a deep valley, in which a body of troops was placed to lie in ambush, while a feint was made to deliver an assault on another side. But the siege could not be pressed so long as the nomadic Kenites, who were allied to both parties, occupied a lofty rock in the neighbourhood of the town. By the law of Moses, as well as by lengthened custom, it was forbidden to injure a tribe which had rendered important service to the Hebrews amid the dangers of their wilderness journey four hundred years before. But if the town or stronghold of the Amalekites were suddenly taken by assault, there was danger of Kenite blood being shed, and the alliance between that tribe and Israel broken. Accordingly Saul gave them a free passage through his lines, as the quarrel was with Amalek, not with them. This remembrance of their fathers' kindness to the Hebrews, not less than the vengeance on Amalek, is a testimony to the truth of one of the smaller incidents in the

story of the coming up of Israel out of Egypt. The same feeling of national gratitude towards the Kenite encampment was afterwards shown by David, in the raids made by him and his men from Ziklag. If Israel inherited a blood feud from the past, they also inherited and faithfully kept ancestral obligations of friendship.

Of the assault of this stronghold we have no account. It is included in the brief summing up of the events of the campaign: 'Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt,' probably the range of desert claimed by these rovers as their own land, extending from the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf to the borders of Egypt. Not a soul whom the Hebrews found was spared save Agag, king of the freebooters. On the lofty rocks, beside the lonely wells, and amid the sands, two hundred thousand Hebrew swords avenged the ancient quarrel between the two nations. But though vengeance fell on as many men and women and children as were met in battle, overtaken in pursuit, or seized in strongholds, Saul, in defiance of the orders he had received, allowed his people to drive off the choicest of their flocks and herds. Everything of little worth in their camping grounds was destroyed; whatever was worth taking was carried away: 'All the property, the worthless, and the refuse, it they utterly destroyed.' As the Hebrews were spread over a wide wilderness, seeking their enemies beside the wells, or following them to known lurking places, Saul might not, in the first instance, have been able to keep his soldiers from saving alive the best of the captured flocks. There may also have been many in the Hebrew army who imagined they recognised sheep and oxen which the rovers had driven off from the pastures of Israel. But as soon as the army reassembled, it became Saul's duty to give full effect to the commands he was himself acting under. He failed to do so. While the issue of the campaign was still in the balance, it might have been easy to destroy these captures.

But as soon as complete success crowned the Hebrew arms, there would be unwillingness to destroy valuable property, which may have been supposed to be the people's own. When Sihon and his people were overthrown, and when the Midianites were punished, Moses himself set an example which Saul may have thought he was entitled to follow: 'The cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took' (Deut. ii. 35). But the cases were not similar. Evidently Saul lacked the boldness needed to deal with soldiers in the circumstances. We may well believe him when he laid the guilt, as he did a few days after, on the people. And it seems as if he consented to save the choicest sheep and cattle alive, only for the purpose of offering them all in sacrifice as soon as the army reached Gilgal. A great feast would please the soldiers; a great sacrifice would please Heaven. Trying to please both parties by a trimming policy, he pleased neither. In a moment of weakness, he again turned the joy of a great triumph into the bitterness of a life-long sorrow.

Punishment speedily overtook the disobedient king. Scarcely had he gathered together his forces and turned his face homewards, than a message from God came to the Prophet Samuel in Ramah. An affectionate regard for the brave king, several years of prosperity, and the clearness of the political sky, seemed to have lulled Samuel into the hope of forgiveness for Saul's former disobedience. In one moment his hopes are dashed in pieces. Clear and plain amid the silence of night spoke the still small voice which he knew full well: 'It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.' The vow of utter destruction, spoken in Jehovah's name, Saul had not performed or established, for the historian uses the very word which the law of vows uses in the Pentateuch to denote fulfilment or ratification. A night of restless anguish followed. The

affections of the prophet were twined firmly round the king. Without ceasing, the man of prayer fought all that night for the soldier. Connected with him by no tie of kindred, Samuel appears in this pleading for the fallen king as one who was girt about with the moral greatness of a loving heart. That night spent in prayer for his friend raises the old man to the loftiest heights of nobleness. But his prayers could not change the purposes of Almighty wisdom. When assured that the words of doom would not be recalled, his spirit settled into contemplation of the king's guilt. Having faithfully discharged the duty of a friend, he could then, in the calm which followed the storm of his first anguish, as faithfully discharge the duty of a messenger of God. Our knowledge of the tenderness with which he did the former, inspires us with the greater awe, as we read the sharpness with which he did the latter. To be reproached by an enemy is easily borne; but to be reproached by a friend like Samuel, after a night spent in praying for the turning aside of a king's ruin, might crush the stoutest heart.

At daybreak Samuel went to meet the returning host. As the city in which he lived lay on or near the road it was likely to take, he expected to meet Saul in a few hours. But the king, after building a pillar or trophy of victory on the top of Carmel, a hilly district in Judah, eight miles south of Hebron, had turned eastward, and was gone to Gilgal, on the banks of Jordan. Samuel found him there. Several years before Saul had waited for the prophet in the same place—waited till he was weary, and till impatience led him to usurp Samuel's office. No such wrong was committed this time. Fatlings of sheep and oxen were ready for the altar, but not a knife would be lifted on them till Samuel came. On the former occasion, a mighty army of invaders threatened from the neighbouring heights to overwhelm Saul's little band; but at this time a host of two hundred thousand Hebrew soldiers, rejoicing in victory and laden with plunder, rested in

conscious strength at the sacred meeting-place. Then, as before, the king went out to meet the prophet, as soon as watchers announced his approach. Perhaps on the same road as before; perhaps, indeed, on the very spot, Samuel and Saul again met. The pride of victory, the conviction of having fulfilled the mission laid on him, animated the king; the sad message which he came to deliver, and the anger which he felt, depressed the mind of the prophet. 'Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord,' were Samuel's words to the king when they last met in this place. 'I have done the word of the Lord,' was Saul's greeting now, a salutation which recalls the former to our mind, and shows it was present to his.

With an unwillingness to remember the past, but with an evident looking back on it, quite in keeping with the place, Saul had addressed himself to Samuel. Our English translation of Saul's words is far from happy. He was sent to fulfil a vow long registered against the freebooters. He was reporting his discharge of it to the prophet, who sent him on the mission. Accordingly he uses the professional or legal word, which indicated a fulfilment of the vow on man's side. 'I have established or fulfilled the word of Jehovah,' therefore, conveys a better idea of the nature of Saul's welcome to Samuel. The prophet answered by expressing surprise at the voice or bleating of flocks and herds around the camp. In his eyes the Hebrew army seemed liker a host of plunderers, laden with spoil, than of obedient followers of Jehovah. Saul replied: 'The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.' There was condemnation in every word spoken by the king. He was sent to obey the voice of Jehovah—the first commandment given from Sinai, and one which included all the others. But Samuel hears the voice of sheep and the voice of oxen; and Saul has obeyed the voice of the people. The keynote of the whole story is

obedience to a voice. That forbidden sparing of the spoil was done by the *people*, not by *him*; the rooting out commanded was done by *us*. 'Leave off,' said Samuel; 'I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night.' And then, sweeping away Saul's pretence about the people sparing the choicest spoil, he laid the guilt on the king himself. 'Wherefore, then, didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?' Samuel was quoting well-known words from the law-books in Exodus and Deuteronomy, passages which might almost have been given by chapter and verse. The whole force of the words he used lies in this fact. Saul would not have regarded them with the same alarm, nor striven to rebut the charge made, had he not seen how every hope of forgiveness for past wrongdoing perished, if Samuel's utterances were well founded. Ready as of old to justify himself and to throw the blame on others, Saul again asserted, in reply, 'I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have walked in the way which the Lord sent me.' Both prophet and king were quoting the words of their law-books, and both knew they were. Modern readers are apt to overlook this link in the story. But Saul also again laid the guilt on the people. His excuses were of no avail. Reminding him, as it were, of his great zeal for the honour of God in his efforts to root witchcraft out of the land, Samuel replied that a ruler who disobeyed Jehovah's commands, as Saul had done, was as heinous a wrong-doer as any who pretended to consult the dead, or by similar means to read the future: 'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.' His concluding words, 'To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,' became the original of one of Solomon's proverbs: 'To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice' (Prov. xxi. 3). Dismayed at the dark gulf on the brink of which he saw himself



standing, Saul is driven to the confession: 'I have sinned because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now, therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me that I may worship the Lord.' There was fire in the prophet's eye and scorn in his looks; all his love changed into bitterness as he replied: 'I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.' Sacrifice was the chief thing in Saul's eyes. Like the people in Jeremiah's time, he counted burnt-offerings and peace-offerings the sum of the law. But he discovered, as they discovered, that 'to obey' precedes sacrifice (Jer. vii. 22). The scenes of Hebrew history, though always changing, were often the same in their general outlines.

If the sacred writer had not recorded the tenderness of Samuel in crying to Jehovah all night for the king, a reader might think every gentle feeling was dead in the prophet's bosom. In the interview which took place between them, there is a sternness of language in Samuel, and an uncommon boldness of rebuke. Not a gleam of sympathy with his lost favourite, not a trace of joy at the success achieved over Amalek, forces its way through the darkness of this scene. The overturning of a throne, unwept and unpitied, is recorded. King and princes are going down before an avenger, whom the king himself called up. Saul attempted to shut his eyes to this dismal fact; but Samuel compelled him to look it in the face. He is dethroned, he is doomed; this he is made to feel and to know. But the sternness of Samuel goes hand in hand with his tenderness. And when these two feelings invite our judgment on the part he bore in this interview, there is but one thing to be said: while the prophet loved Saul much, he loved Jehovah more. Because he loved Saul much, he cried to God all night, striving to turn aside the sword of justice. When he failed, the greater love which he bore to Jehovah came into play. By Saul's

presumption, dishonour was done to his heavenly Master. His own love to Saul had met with an unworthy return. And thoughts of these things turn the sweetness of a loving nature into wormwood. By some such process the tenderness of Samuel changed into severity, as he looked on the flocks and herds which the army brought from the desert. A man whose sense of honour and whose love of truth are high, will speak more sharply to those he loves than we might think at all possible, when he finds them stooping to the dishonourable as the only way of covering a fault. Saul had stooped thus low in his dealings with Samuel. Not only did he maintain as a fact what he knew to be untrue, but when driven to make confession of his guilt, he cast the blame off himself on his soldiers. Samuel's heart was moved, by these unkingly doings, to clothe his feelings in words of sudden and sharp rebuke. It must also be borne in mind that Saul did not destroy Amalek, as he professed to have done. Before many years elapsed, these freebooters were again plundering Judah, and one of them was a slave in the Hebrew army at the battle in which Saul lost his crown and his life. Their strength may have been broken, but enough was left to terrify Judah when its soldiers were called elsewhere to fight their country's battles. Three of Jesse's sons are known to have followed Saul to the border during the campaign in which Goliath fell. David only was at home, and four sons remain unaccounted for. Evidently they were on duty somewhere, most probably in the south against Amalek. And when Saul was encamped on Mount Gilboa, a destroying band of these rovers burst from the desert on the unprotected south country. Saul had not executed his commission; his boast was an untruth designed to cover a breach of orders.

Having delivered his message, Samuel turned his back on the fallen prince, determined to quit the camp. But Saul, seizing hold of his mantle, attempted to detain him. In haste to leave a man towards whom bitterness had taken the

place of love, the prophet hurried away. The loose skirt of the robe, on which Saul had laid hold, was torn in the struggle. Indignant at this breach of dignity, Samuel turned on the king: 'The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou.' Stunned, it would seem, by the suddenness of a blow which was dashing to the ground every remnant of hope, the humbled prince besought the prophet not to disgrace him before the elders of Israel: 'I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.' A request so reasonable was not refused. The rending of the mantle, the sharpness of the rebuke, and the humility of the king's prayer, cooled Samuel's anger as quickly as it had grown hot. But several were probably standing by who witnessed the king's fall. Some of his officers may have seen and heard all that passed. In course of time the story of this interview, with the rending of the mantle and of the kingdom, would pass from mouth to mouth as a whispered secret, till it became the talk of the whole nation.

Samuel yielded to the prayers of Saul, but it was to act according to his own views, not to humour king or people. Of worship and thanks for the victory the briefest mention is made. Nor was a feast such as Saul intended possible, for the flocks and herds were accursed. After the worship, Samuel ordered Agag to be brought forward. He came cheerfully, congratulating himself that the bitterness of death was past. Expecting to be received with respect, he finds himself face to face with death. 'As thy sword hath made women childless,' exclaimed his judge, 'so shall thy mother be childless among women.' And the soldiers standing by cut him in pieces. The king's disobedience had laid this terrible necessity on the prophet. Gilgal, the scene of friendship between Samuel and Saul in days bygone, thus witnessed the rending

of all the ties that bound them to one another. The prophet withdrew to his own house to pray for the helpless prince, but he visited him no more. Saul also shunned the company of Samuel. Flatterers appear to have gained the king's ear, and to have set him against the prophet. Threats also seem to have been spoken by them, which alarmed Samuel for his life. Instead of being softened by the calamities which were gathering round their sovereign, the courtiers became desperate. In the king, the beginnings of that madness which clouded his later years were already working, unknown to himself and to his servants. Disobedience to his superior led to tyranny of the worst kind toward his inferiors. But the two together unhinged his mind, till his insanity became a danger to every one who opposed his wishes.

The story of the war with Amalek points back to the past as well as forward to the future. No reader even of our English translation can fail to discover in it the echo of words and ideas familiar to him in the Pentateuch: 'To obey the voice of Jehovah,' 'To do right or to do evil in the eyes of Jehovah,' and 'To be rejected' of Him, are phrases which would alone suffice to prove the existence of Exodus and Deuteronomy when the story was written. This is not denied now. Historical doubt has taken another and a more singular turn. The story is assumed to have been either inserted as it stands, or greatly embellished by a very late writer. Of this there is no proof. But the echo of a part of the story, heard afterwards in Hebrew history, justifies a reader in considering the story itself as containing an echo of earlier times. Samuel's rent robe indicated the rending of the kingdom. In the same way, though nearly a century later, the rending of Jeroboam's robe indicated the splitting up of Solomon's empire. An idea so similar in two cases, far apart in time, points to one as the original and the other as a copy. History frequently repeats itself on similar lines to these. Even the rebuke of Saul by Samuel is made more

forcible by a quotation which it contains from the Song of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy: 'To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.' The burning of the fat by the priests is not the only reference to the law in these six Hebrew words, important though it is in its bearing on the existence of Leviticus at that time; 'fat of rams' is found elsewhere only in the song (Deut. xxxii. 14): 'With fat of lambs and of rams.' It is impossible to get rid of these and other coincidences of phrase as accidental. They are nerves of life running through the history, and giving feeling to every part. If they be taken away, the history is reft of its life. It becomes a machine, wound up to go through certain movements, but destitute of the living action which marks this narrative. We have seen also in Samuel's words, 'To obey is better than sacrifice,' the original of one of Solomon's proverbs. As there is no doubt about the writer of that proverb, there should be none about the currency of the history of Saul in his day.

The destruction of Amalek is one of those incidents in Hebrew history which is sometimes thought to leave a stain on the moral code of the people by whom it was effected. Like the slaughter of the Midianites by order of Moses, and the destruction of the Canaanites by Joshua, it forms an outstanding difficulty, which seems to conflict with the divine authority of Scripture. Perhaps, also, not a few shrink from regarding the command to utterly destroy Amalek as a command issued by Him who doeth good even to the unthankful and the unworthy. A whole nation is doomed to destruction, apparently for a fault committed by their forefathers four hundred years before. That doom is uttered by the Judge of all the earth. And the king, to whom the execution of it was entrusted, is deposed from his throne because he spared the head man of the nation, and did not cut the flocks and herds in pieces. These are the facts of the case. Humanity, it will be said, shudders at the command,

at the slaughter, and at the doom of the hapless monarch. These breathings of humanity are sometimes turned into words. The Most High could have had no share in these transactions, and the book which sanctions them cannot be a revelation of His will. Or, if any be unwilling to speak so freely, they stop short on the ground that this slaughter was a result of customs which produced in the Hebrews a harshness of manners condemned by our Lord Himself.

In examining the morality of the destruction of Amalek, the number of men and women slain has nothing whatever to do with the principle in question. It makes no difference whether a hundred encampments were sacked, or only one; whether ten thousand men were killed, or only one, if Saul had no right to invade and slaughter. A whole tribe destroyed, a whole nation blotted from the roll of mankind at one swoop, bulks more largely in our eyes than the slaughter of a few. But supposing there were no valid grounds for the destruction, there could be no difference in principle between ordering the killing of one innocent man and of ten thousand, or between the sacking of one encampment and the sacking of a hundred. So far as the principle of Amalek's destruction is concerned, the number of the slain does not require consideration. It may make the ruin bulk more largely in a reader's eyes; but, if the principle be right, the heaps of dead have nothing more to do with the matter than hundreds or thousands of slain with the principle on which a war is waged in modern times.

But further, this shrinking from the doom of the guilty is not a new thing in the world's history. It is older than the Hebrew nation itself. When the Most High made known His purpose to destroy the Cities of the Plain, Abraham, moved by the same stirrings of humanity, which we are apt to regard as the peculiar glory of our age, interceded for them. Human nature, as represented by the patriarch, shrank from the destruction. A feeling of wrong about to

be done took hold of him at the thought of a whole community being suddenly swept off the earth. He struggled hard to keep that feeling down. He dared not clothe it in words, as the men of our time do. But mildly and sadly he so pleaded as to discover his thoughts. This feeling of humanity, therefore, is not a new thing. With our present knowledge, and in our present state, it is almost a necessity of human nature. But another feeling has been given to men to check the too vigorous workings of mere pity. In Abraham's case, we hear the counter feeling speaking when he asks himself, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' A sense of justice and feelings of pity are thus allowed full play in Abraham's bosom. The latter are more vehement than the former, they hurry us away, they cloud our judgment. They look to only one side of a case, while justice requires us to understand and carefully to weigh both sides. With feeling there is an excitement which disturbs or darkens reason; with justice there must be calmness of judgment. Far higher than feelings of humanity, there may be, though unknown to us, a justice requiring the infliction of a punishment, which our pity shrinks from as harsh or terrible. Knowing all the facts on both sides of the case, it is able to judge without the partiality which arises from the excitement of pity. The Judge of all the earth takes this dispassionate view. Men neither do, nor can. Seeing the destruction of a whole race, they judge as they would not judge were the sufferer one man guilty of crime. Pity is not allowed to interfere with justice when a traitor, or a spy, or a murderer meets his fate. But an all-knowing judge may treat nations and races precisely as men treat their fellows who have been guilty of crime. This is the position taken by Hebrew historians. It is a reasonable position; one, too, which can be defended and vindicated on principles of the highest morality. As a man is to his fellow-men for reward or punishment, so may a nation be to God.

The present age cannot, then, take credit to itself for having advanced in refinement beyond these ancient Hebrews. Abraham, unquestionably, felt as we feel, and spoke as we would speak. The patriarch, indeed, seems to bear the character of a representative man in his interview with the Most High. He speaks for men generally, urging his plea on the purely human ground of pity for the doomed. He brings forward precisely the same arguments as are urged now to throw doubt on the morality of the destruction of nations by command of Heaven. In answer to his pleadings, feelings of pity are allowed to have full play. Step by step humanity carries Abraham into a region where feeling and ignorance would lead him into error. Divine justice silences the promptings of pity, and in so doing warns men to remember that there is a Judge whose sense of justice, arising from full knowledge of facts, may often do violence to man's mistaken pity.

There are no other grounds on which the morality of Amalek's destruction can be placed. The customs of the age, and the harshness of manners among the Hebrews, furnish no explanation. God Himself commanded Moses to record the sin and the doom of the freebooters; and God Himself commanded Samuel to send Saul on the work of destruction. The moral code of the Hebrews, the blood feuds, and other customs of the age, do not therefore come into play here, nor can they in any measure soften the apparent harshness of the doom of Amalek. Human pity looks at but one side of the case. It has not that knowledge of the other side—the guilt of the offenders—which enables divine justice to pass judgment without bias.



## CHAPTER V.

### LAW AND LEGISLATION AMONG THE HEBREWS.

THERE is one remarkable fact in Hebrew history which seems to have been overlooked. At no time during the five centuries covered by the monarchy (1100–588 B.C.) is a word said of a body of laws enacted or codified by any of the kings. That silence of the writers who have recorded the rise and fall of the kingdom is made more impressive by the one law, and the only one, which is ascribed to a king—David's regulation for dividing the spoils of battle between the army in the field and its baggage guard. A thing so small in itself brings into bolder relief the fact of no prince either introducing new laws into the country, or reducing old customs to writing and giving them the force of law. Evidently a law code existed before a king filled the throne of Israel. At the choice of a king for the first time, Samuel the prophet acts the part of a lawgiver ; but never, except in the one instance referred to, are Hebrew princes represented as exercising this office. They make no show in history save as administrators or breakers of a code of laws already in existence. A position so singular is filled by the kings of no other nation whose annals have come down to our time. Of the power of law among the Hebrews too much cannot be said. Their proverbs, their popular speech, their songs, and the events of their daily life are full of its praises. Everywhere is seen the reign of law. But the rulers never pride themselves on making new or codifying old laws. They build and endow a magnificent temple, they restore a neglected worship, they repair a temple that has been burned or has fallen into ruins. They rearrange the recognised

ministers of religion according to their ideas of what is fitting and honourable ; they fortify cities and equip armies at their will, or according to their ability. But we never see them ordaining new laws, or altering old laws to meet the changing needs of society. Always do they appear as if their hands, quite as much as those of their subjects, were tied by an existing code. A law of the land, given before kings began to rule, seems to have stood high above both throne and people. Unquestionably, a relation so unusual, subsisting for five centuries, is a peculiarity which distinguishes Hebrew history from the history of every other people. No romancer could have invented the idea of laws, once given, remaining unchanged, without addition and without subtraction. Still less could a series of historians have imagined the idea of subjection to these ancient laws in a race of princes, some of whom were conquerors, some tyrants, and some obstinate to their own and to their people's ruin. To call this the result of a designed concealment of facts is an incredible explanation of the silence. The writers had nothing to conceal. They knew that these kings dared not add to or alter the people's law-book. Part of it might be set at defiance for a time, but their pages showed the ruinous consequences of this course, and the power of the law to vindicate its majesty. These writers recognised certain well-marked boundaries, within which the national code confined both king and people. Fullest freedom of action was allowed to them if they did not overstep these limits ; no freedom whatever was given to either prince or people to travel beyond. We must therefore go to the history itself to ascertain the beginning and completion of the law code which attained to this paramount rule in the nation. A law-book, once given and remaining unchanged for centuries, is pronounced an impossibility. But theoretical views of the possible or the impossible have no place in the matter. We are dealing only with facts, and these carry us back for the beginning of a law-book to the sojourn of the people in Egypt.

When the Israelites were marching to Mount Sinai, it required uncommon forethought and practical knowledge in the leaders to keep order among a host so numerous and so unaccustomed to freedom as the Hebrews were. Born and brought up in bondage, they did not at once become free in mind, as they became free in body. Into the free ways of free men the vast bulk of the nation carried the thoughts and feelings of slaves. Their sudden deliverance from hard task-masters only gave room for fuller play to the slave habits, the littleness, the trifling, in which their lives had been nursed. Apparently the two leaders, who had fought the battle for them with Pharaoh, had none to rely on for preserving order and maintaining justice among the fugitives but the elders and the judges (Ex. xxi. 22), whom the experience of a few days proved to be worthless. Assault, theft, quarrel, smiting to the death, losses from accident or design, straying of cattle, goring by oxen, were certain to occur among the people as they fled before the Egyptians. Possibly, however, the twelve months which preceded their deliverance gave Moses time and food for thought, if they were not meant to prepare him for the troubles of leadership. From Egypt, also, they carried with them a body of national customs, which had been the growth of centuries in that land, or which, having sprung up in Palestine under the patriarchs, had slowly received additions in Goshen. To suppose that Moses, as a lawgiver, worked on virgin soil, and that the people he commanded had no law code, either written or traditional, when he was placed at their head, is too wild an idea to be entertained. The Hebrews took down to Egypt with them a body of divinely sanctioned laws or customs, adapted to their needs. They also took a similar body of laws and customs with them into the desert under Moses. Common sense recognises these as first principles. A vague idea seems to prevail that Moses found no ties among them to bind society together; that he was the giver, or the supposed giver, of every law; and that till he

spoke the words none of them knew his own rights or duties. To put this idea in writing is sufficient to show its futility. It is the same as if we should propose to reduce the Hebrews below the level of savages. With the laws which the people took with them into the desert, no one was better acquainted than Moses. Originating in the land of Canaan, to which the fugitives were bound, they had been tested by experience in the somewhat similar land of Egypt, which had harboured their fathers for ages. Time and custom, working with the divine sanction, had given them a binding force on the conscience of every family in the nation. To write down offhand a complete law-book for two or three millions of men, and to work its statutes into their hearts immediately, was not the problem before Moses during the flight from Egypt; he taught them '*the ordinances and the laws*' (Ex. xviii. 20), the ancient '*statutes of God.*' Before they have been two months out from Egypt their leader is seen toiling from morning to night, dispensing justice among his quarrelsome followers. Jethro, a desert chief, sees the endless toil; he knows it cannot last; and advises the appointment of a graduated series of judges, who should take this unbearable weight off their leader's shoulders. These judges, small as well as great, had the same ancestral laws and customs to appeal to as Moses himself. Justice would be best dispensed if they had a written code before them, which the education, the training, the habits of their leader, made it likely he would furnish—a transcript of ancestral customs, common law as it is called in England. New cases were certain to emerge in the new circumstances, but ancient rules would suffice in the great body of suits that might arise. The Five Books contain these ancient laws and customs of the Hebrews. However much they may be disguised by new legislation, which a more formal worship and the changed position of the people made necessary, we shall find them in the Pentateuch. The man who was first told to commit them to writing, though he need

not have first delivered them, may have been the lawgiver of the Hebrews. Justinian and Napoleon were lawgivers, although they did little more than commission learned men to reduce to order laws and customs which had existed ages before their day.

If, then, we examine the book of laws which follows the promulgation of the Ten Commandments (Ex. xxi.-xxiii.), we shall find only a small part of it bearing on the reason given for the people quitting Egypt, 'to hold a feast unto the Lord in the wilderness.' But that section of the code is too elementary to be regarded as aught higher than the beginnings of legislation on national worship. Unless there be good evidence to the contrary, we may therefore consider this book as one which the people largely used in their land of bondage. It lays down the relations between man and man in the ever-changing circumstances of life; but while it contains nothing peculiarly applicable to Palestine, it introduces and omits arrangements which point rather to Egypt, if not as its birth-place, at least as long its field of operation.

	EX. XXI.	EX. XXII.	EX. XXIII.
Hebrew men slaves, . . . .	1-6	—	—
Hebrew women slaves, . . . .	7-11	—	—
Assault, degrees of, and penalties, . . . .	12-15	—	—
	18-23	—	—
	26, 27	—	—
Law of retaliation, . . . .	23-25	—	—
Wresting of justice, . . . .	—	—	6-9
Theft of men, . . . .	16	—	—
Theft of beasts and goods, . . . .	—	1-5, 7, 8	—
Respect to superiors, . . . .	17	28	—
Accidents—oxen, . . . .	28-36	—	—
Fire-raising, . . . .	—	6	—
Deposits, . . . .	—	7-13	—
Hires, . . . .	—	14, 15	—
Seduction, . . . .	—	16, 17	—
Witchcraft and idolatry, . . . .	—	18-20	—
Strangers, widows, etc., . . . .	—	21-24	—
Usury, . . . .	—	25-27	—
Firstlings and first-fruits, . . . .	—	29, 30	—
Torn flesh, . . . .	—	31	—
Laws of good citizenship, . . . .	—	—	1-5
Sabbatic year and day, . . . .	—	—	10-13
Feasts, . . . .	—	—	14-19

The sections in this code are not always kept distinct in the division according to verses. 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk,' has no relation to the section preceding (Ex. xxiii. 14-19). Had it formed a line or a verse by itself, as it obviously ought, some misapprehension would have been avoided.

There is not one enactment in the code, which might not have been in force among Hebrew villagers and shepherds on the banks of the Nile, even to the annual feasts—religious assemblies which are well known to have been common in Egypt. According to Graf, it represents the Hebrews as not only settled in Palestine, but in peaceful and undisturbed possession of the country. But he goes farther. From the word 'ruler' (Ex. xxii. 28) he infers that a king is meant,—a large assumption, although there is nothing to prevent us applying it to the kings of Egypt, who had sheltered Israel for generations,—and, from other parts of the code, that the people were living in peace with strangers about them. With but one exception, these views seem perfectly just: Palestine is not mentioned in the code. Twice are the people reminded, 'Ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' But between that reminder and the ascription of conquered Palestine as the birthplace of the code, there is a wide gulf. To add the reminder to an ancient code, when it was ratified at Horeb, was most natural, and will sufficiently explain its presence. On the other hand, the mention of houses and door-posts proves that this law-book did not originate in the wilderness—the land of tents, not of houses.

The laws relating to slaves contemplate none but those of Hebrew blood, sold by fathers, or bought, it may be, from creditors. Had these laws originated in Canaan, this narrowness of view would be unintelligible. A people in undisturbed possession of their country and enjoying the blessings of plenty, would, in that age of the world, have had other slaves than their own countrymen and countrywomen. But the code speaks of

none else. Evidently the state of things contemplated in it is more applicable to Egypt, the house of Hebrew bondage, than to Palestine, the home of Hebrew freedom. Pharaoh, jealous of the strength of Israel, would not allow the people to increase their numbers, by purchasing prisoners brought from foreign parts, or slaves sold in an open market. Their own countrymen they might purchase, slave grinding slave still lower, in furtherance of the king's plan to destroy the might of the Hebrews; for all the Hebrews in Egypt were not on the same level of bondage to Pharaoh. All were subject to Egypt, and all were oppressed; but even then there were various degrees of wealth and various ranks among the Israelites. It ought not, therefore, to cause surprise, if we find the richer families buying and the poorer selling their own kindred.

The omissions in the code appear to be remarkable. The code says nothing about boundaries of private lands,—if there were such in Goshen,—or thefts of ground by removing boundary stones. An open country, unfenced and undivided, is clearly contemplated in this most ancient law-book. On the other hand, the book of Deuteronomy is particularly strong on an act so dangerous to the peace of an agricultural community as the removal of a boundary: 'Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which former men set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it,' and 'Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark' (Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17). As this law became the source of a proverb in Solomon's reign, the change of words made on it brings clearly out the effect of time in modifying the view taken: 'Thou shalt not remove a landmark of antiquity, which thy fathers made.' There is slight mention of *antiquity* or *fathers* in the law as first given. A code, which had been in force in Egypt, could say nothing about landmarks, which would also hold true of Palestine; for between the mud dykes of the Nile country and the rocky fragments of Palestine there was nothing in common. Besides, the

falling in of the banks of the great river, and the sweeping away at times of the dykes or other fainter boundary lines of estates, rendered it necessary to have recourse to surer means of measurement than any, which then sufficed for countries bordering on Egypt. In other ancient law-books prominence is justly given to questions affecting the boundary marks of private lands.<sup>1</sup> A recent discovery of boundary stones, covered with writing, shows the importance attached to them as far back as 1175 B.C., even in the alluvial lands of Babylonia.<sup>2</sup> And in the famous Athenian law-code (594 B.C.), the lawgiver Solon laid down the distances at which walls and houses required to be built, or olives and other trees planted on either side, an authority which the Twelve Tables of Rome afterwards followed. The omission of both the word and the thing in this Hebrew law-book is therefore not without meaning.

On the sale or mortgaging of land, the code in Exodus is equally silent. Private property is recognised,—sheep, oxen, or any beast, clothes, corn, ‘money or stuff,’—but not one word is said about private estates, which men could sell to others or pawn for a temporary loan. But arrangements for raising money on land were unavoidable in a country divided, as Palestine was, into innumerable small properties, occupied by the owners themselves. There is, therefore, something unusual in the silence of this ancient law-book on that subject. It seems to point not to the existence of private estates as in Canaan, but to a common possession of a whole district, which was at first certainly the condition on which the Hebrews received Goshen from Pharaoh. The Israelites may not have had private estates in Egypt. But they did possess private estates in Canaan, and detailed arrangements were made in their law-book for buying and selling, for transfers, and for mortgages.

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Fragments and Specimens of Early Latin*, 258.

<sup>2</sup> For a recital of the boundaries of estates in Egypt, see Brugsch, *Egypt under the Pharaohs*, ii. 174.



So much the more singular is the silence of their oldest law code on these subjects.

A third point about this code is the vagueness of its dealing with vines and olives. The vineyard is mentioned three times, in a way so cursory as to suggest doubts of much acquaintance with it among the people. The olive, again, is dismissed in a single word. How different with the corn! Take one example in proof from the law of fire-raising: 'If fire break out and catch in thorns, so that the stacks (heaps) of corn, or the standing corn, or the field be consumed therewith, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution' (see Judges xv. 5). A vineyard in Egypt was a luxury, fenced in with walls and guarded by gates and bars.<sup>1</sup> But in Palestine it was a common thing. Even in the deserts of that country, the long miles of rough walls for training the vines still show how plentiful and how common the grape was among the Hebrews. This luxury of Egyptian kings and nobles was promised to the children of Israel before they escaped from bondage; it was used afterwards to taunt their great leader with: 'Thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards' (Num. xvi. 14). Besides, the very use of the words for standing corn and vineyards is peculiar. 'Six years shalt thou prune thy vineyard and gather in the fruit thereof' exhibits the sort of acquaintance with grapes shown in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. It is theoretical, not practical. But, in Deuteronomy, a living thing is before a reader, not merely the letter of a law: 'We will not turn into the fields or into the vineyards,' said the Hebrew messengers to Sihon and Edom when pleading for right of way through their countries; and, 'When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure;' or, as if to condemn the Egyptian custom of planting various sorts of trees in their luxurious vineyards, 'Thou

<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, *Anc. Egyp.*, i. 377.

shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds.’<sup>1</sup> Since there is but slight mention made of the vine and the olive in the Exodus law-book, they were not, up to that time, or had not been, of practical value in the eyes of the Hebrew people. Although gardens, containing fruit trees and vines, were not uncommon in Egypt, strangers seem to have seen little of them, for early Greek writers did not consider Egypt a grape country. Vineyards were manifestly things of luxury and not in common use. In Palestine, again, the vine and the olive were almost necessities of life.

When, therefore, the Hebrews left Egypt, they had a code of laws or customs with them, which we cannot be far wrong in identifying with the precepts contained in Ex. xxi.-xxiii. They were acquainted with sacrifices also — peace-offerings and burnt-offerings—from a remote antiquity. Even ‘Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God’ (Ex. xviii. 12) before they reached Sinai. Clearly, then, they must have had altars of some kind. The law or custom followed in building them was probably the same as that in Exodus: ‘An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings and thy peace-offerings. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it.’ But there was growth or development in this law, for an addition was made to it at the end of the fugitives’ wilderness wanderings: ‘Thou shalt not set up to thee an image of any wood beside the altar of Jehovah thy God which thou shalt make for thyself; and thou shalt not raise for thee a stone pillar, which the Lord thy God hateth’ (Deut. xvi. 21, 22). When that addition was made, Israel

<sup>1</sup> Num. xxi. 22, xx. 17; Deut. xxiii. 24, xxii. 9, vi. 11. The words for standing corn and vineyards occur eleven times in Deuteronomy, and eight times in Exodus and Leviticus together. As vineyards are named four times in Numbers, which recounts the passage of Hebrews through a grape country, we have to add them to the eleven of Deuteronomy. It was *theory* in Exodus and Leviticus; it was *sight* in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

was in a country abounding with idolatrous pillars, both wood and stone. They were not heard about; they were seen. Abominations were connected with them, which made the addition necessary to the old altar law. Pillars such as it allowed were no longer permitted. Even the name 'pillar,' though used by Jacob and Moses, ceased to be a word of honour in the Hebrew tongue. It was a doubtful term at the best (2 Sam. xviii. 18). A memorial pillar was no longer called by that word. 'Hand' or 'Place,' as our version translates the new word, was preferred. 'Absalom's hand,' or 'Saul set him up a hand,' are two examples of this use. Hence the distinction in the law-book, 'A pillar which Jehovah hateth.' There were pillars which He did hate: there were others which He did not hate. The same word expressed both kinds; but gradually the idolatrous kind secured the word mainly to itself.

Quite in keeping with both this law and the addition to it, therefore, is the record of an altar which Moses is said to have 'builded under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel' (Ex. xxiv. 4). These twelve stone symbols, standing round a central altar, betokened unity of faith as the surest bond of the rescued people. But he did more than build an altar and pillars. He sent certain young Hebrews to act as priests in offering sacrifices. Moses himself, officiating as high priest, sprinkled half of the blood on the altar, and sprinkled the people with the other half, after he had 'read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people.' This book contained the Ten Commandments (Ex. xx. 1-17) and the law code, which extends from Ex. xx. 22 to Ex. xxiii. 33. Immediately after comes a record of the writing out of 'all the words of the Lord,' the building of the altar, and the ratification of the covenant by Moses as priest (Ex. xxiv. 7). The story is thus full of instruction. 'Pillar' and 'priest' are used in it in ways that were modified or forbidden at a later period. Each word thus came to have two

meanings in the written record. 'Priest' in this narrative evidently means a young man of the highest rank in society. It was the same as first-born when used of the young chief of a family, or a collection of separate households. *Prince* or *noble* is the corresponding word in our language. It retained that meaning for ages afterwards, though it was gradually lost in the increasing glories of 'the priests the Levites.' Even pillars, which Jehovah did not hate, were found near the altar, when heathenism ceased to be a snare to the people. At the north side of the altar in the second temple were eight dwarf pillars, with a cedar beam over them.<sup>1</sup> But, while the narrative shows the familiarity of the people with the idea of *priests*, this law code neither mentions the name nor assigns them revenues. It existed and was in operation before the Levitical priests were heard of.

But a serious objection to the authority of this ancient code is frequently urged. The laws, thus said to be ratified by Heaven on Sinai, are declared to be contradicted by laws, which were given forty years after in Deuteronomy on the plains of Moab. Both sets of laws cannot, therefore, have come from God; one or both must be the growth of man's experience and man's wants. The whole thing, then, resolves itself into a question of fact: Are there contradictions between the two sets of laws? Let us take the following as a specimen, one also that has been strongly insisted on:—

EX. XXII. 31.

'Ye shall be holy men unto me; neither shall ye eat flesh torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.'

DEUT. XIV. 21.

'Ye shall not eat anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien; for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God.'

The two laws refer to similar things, or rather, the one is an explanation of the other. But a look at the original Hebrew discovers a letter added by our translators to the Exodus law,

<sup>1</sup> Barclay, *Talmud*, 261.

which has gone far to obscure the meaning. 'Ye shall cast it to the dogs,' they have put, instead of, 'Ye shall cast it to the dog.' The whole dispute, then, turns upon the meaning of 'the dog.' Had the words been, 'Ye shall cast it to your dogs,' the meaning would have been plain. But in one of these codes we have the law, Thou shalt not bring the price of a dog into the house of the Lord (Dent. xxiii. 18), which cannot evidently mean a dog in the literal acceptation of the word. No more can the word be so taken in the common phrases, 'A dead dog,' 'Am I a dog to do this thing?' 'A dog's head,' and so forth. 'The dog' clearly means any one who is not holy as the Hebrews are, that is, strangers and aliens. The law then runs thus: Ye shall be holy men unto me; neither shall ye eat flesh torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the unholy, that is, to any one of another race from you, to stranger or alien. As soon as we put ourselves in the position of those who at first received this law, all semblance of contradiction between the two codes disappears.

This most ancient code of Hebrew laws reveals a people far advanced in civilisation. Private righting of injury is not allowed, except, manifestly, in the case of wilful murder; but even then it is kept within bounds by the intervention of a higher authority. Magistrates take up the quarrel raised by wrong-doing. The state, of which they are the embodiment, stands between the sufferer and the wrong-doer, takes charge of the offender, and lays down the punishment. It does not look on with unconcern when a wrong is done, or when the injured cry for justice. A masterful man could do what he pleased in the heroic age of ancient Greece, till he met with one more masterful than himself. The widows' and the orphans' cries were then unheeded. Hebrew law abhorred this indifference to right. It threw a shield around the weak, the helpless, the unprotected. It defied the strongest to set its commands at naught. It warned him of a mightier than the mightiest, who regarded the tears of the oppressed, with

full purpose of avenging their wrongs. The state is taken bound to discharge these duties as the representative of this mightiest of overseers. This law-book, therefore, does not bind men together as members of society by an agreement to adopt the best plan for securing their own protection, or their own interest, or the greatest happiness of the greatest number. There is nothing abstruse or philosophical in its arrangements. It is intensely practical; it may even be called so commonplace as to be level to the understanding of the humblest reader. A higher power is recognised at work in the world, rewarding the good and returning evil to the evil. Righteousness, not self-interest or mere utility, binds society together, and is ever striven against by the passions of evil-doers. All magistrates and judges are taught to look beyond themselves to a Judge, who shall weigh their actings in the balance of purest justice. A view of society so simple is apt to be thought little of, because it is the view with which all are familiar in Britain. But Hebrew statesmen held that view more than three thousand years ago. And they held it in a fulness and purity unknown to the world at large, till within the last half century (Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 7, 8, 10, Heb.).

This law code is sometimes compared with the laws of the Twelve Tables at Rome, which were the gathered wisdom of Greece and of the Italian states, a thousand years later than the exodus. Several laws in the two codes are the same, or almost the same; but in breadth of view and in humaneness of feeling, the Hebrew far surpasses the Roman. It was not a heavy yoke, thrust by a few above on toiling thousands below; nor was it the work of these thousands, bursting the chains of oppressors, and claiming for themselves something of justice and fair-play. On its face it bears proof of an honest desire to lighten the load of ill in man's life, by guarding the rights of the weak against the strong, and by dispensing to great and small the even-handed justice of heaven. Degrading punishments were not known to this ancient law-

book of Israel. Free men might be scourged for crimes, for those who had disgraced their position as citizens forfeited its rights. But the outrages on humanity tolerated by Roman law in the prisons of rich men, or in the army, were unknown in Israel. Unfortunate debtors in Rome were deprived of every right of manhood and citizenship by creditors, who were often the guiltier of the two. Officers of standing in her conquering legions could be caned by their superiors, as were the common soldiers. Torture also, as a means of discovering the truth in legal proceedings, was entirely absent from Hebrew history. Cruelties, which have disgraced the most civilized nations of modern Europe, were not condemned, because they were wholly unknown in Israel. 'My son, give glory to God,' that is, 'confess,' is the only torture read of in the Old Testament, applied by a judge to a criminal. It was the most sacred appeal, which could be addressed to a wrong-doer's conscience. Egypt was in this respect less advanced in civilisation than Palestine. Even the exposure of dead bodies on the gibbet, beyond the day of execution, was forbidden in the Mosaic law. The sorrowful story of Rizpah in David's reign is an exception which proves the rule. How different from the state of things in our own country little more than half a century ago! The streets of London, the roads leading to it, and the river Thames were then barbarously defiled by the bleaching skulls and bones of dead criminals, exposed to the public gaze for a terror to evil-doers. We do not wish to keep out of view a well-known and opposite side to this account of Hebrew civilisation, as seen in the law-book. The wholesale slaughter of Midian, the curse on Amalek, the rooting out of the Canaanites, are problems in moral philosophy, which have drawn down on the Hebrew lawgiver condemnation for barbarity. But it is most unjust to study these problems without regard to the legislation of which he was the author. His critics may have viewed them from a position which he knew as well as they, but may have refused to

occupy. His laws ought to be considered as a whole; for it may turn out that the acts condemned as inhuman prove to be justifiable in the light of facts. Set over against these problems, which have two sides, laws for all time like the following, which have but one side, and are found together in a cluster in the law-book: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' 'The stranger, thou shalt love him as thyself;' 'Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure;' 'The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night till morning' (Lev. xix. 13, 18, 34, 35).

The course of the legislation thus begun at Sinai was broken in upon by a most untoward event—the casting of the golden calf. As a fault is in geology, parting the strata, and bringing their faces to an abrupt end against the faces of other strata, so that event was to the course of Mosaic legislation. What preceded it was parted from what followed by a violent interference, coming from an unlooked-for quarter. The whole legislation had to be done over again. The broken tables of the law had to be renewed; the written conditions had to be repeated, at least in their principal parts, if the covenant was to stand. In this renewal of the covenant several of its provisions are repeated word for word. We have no reason to be surprised at these repetitions. They occur in other ancient writings as well as in Exodus. But there is a marked advance in the renewal over the statement originally made: 'The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.' Spiritual worship cannot exist along with molten gods. Evidently the Hebrews thought the two could live together, without the former receiving hurt from the latter. They discover now that this cannot be. The renewal of the covenant leaves them no room for doubt.

This way of renewing the broken covenant is regarded as a suspicious proceeding. For 'in Ex. xxxiv. 17-26 there is a



group of various legal precepts, which are found already standing together in the collection (chap. xxi.—xxiii.), and in part agreeing exactly and verbally, and these various laws are also to some extent connected together in just the same way in both these passages.' Ultimately the repetition is pared down to less than half that number of verses; but it is reckoned so 'surprising' as to be an 'argument against the Mosaic authorship.'<sup>1</sup> If there is any force in the argument, it comes to this: A history which records the making of a treaty, the breaking of it, and the renewal of it, cannot be genuine if, in the story of the renewal, it record again the main provisions of the treaty as first given! Or, to ensure its genuineness, it must distinctly warn the reader of the reason for thus repeating these provisions. In other words, by supposing a reader to have the sense to discover for himself the reasons of things, the history incurs the charge of not being genuine; if it had warned the reader of reasons so plain, it would have been at once pronounced a forgery. So difficult is it to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of criticism! But there is another repetition of larger dimensions ready to the hand of an objector. The whole section of the book of Exodus, xxv.—xxxi. 17, respecting the building and appointments of the tabernacle, is repeated, sometimes word for word and verse for verse, in the section of the same book, xxxv.—xxxix. The repetition is no longer three or four verses; it is now five or six chapters. But there is even worse. The former of these two sections ends with a strongly expressed order to keep the Sabbath; and the second of them begins with quoting and even expanding that order. Both of these orders are substantially repetitions of the fourth commandment, already given on the arrival of the people at Sinai. But these repetitions prove nothing against the genuineness of the book. On the contrary, the author, acting as many other writers have acted, repeated sections of his work without

<sup>1</sup> Bleek (Wellhausen), § 22 (84).

thinking the repetitions would ever be quoted as grounds for denying his honesty or his existence.

We come now to the legislation in the book of Leviticus. If we accept the statements of the book itself regarding the course of the legislation after the building of the tabernacle, we have a plain, and usually a clear narrative of facts. Should we reject these statements, we find ourselves in a labyrinth of doubt. Thus, on two pages of Bleek's *Introduction to the Old Testament* (2d ed.), translated for the benefit of English readers, we have the following mixture of hesitating view, confident assertion, and condemnation of others respecting the laws in Leviticus.<sup>1</sup> While he regards a large portion of the book of Leviticus to be Mosaic, and none of it as belonging to a later age than Saul's, he feels himself on such sinking sand, that his reasoning in the two pages referred to is a conglomerate of a most elastic nature. 'Perhaps' occurs thrice in them; probably, twice; probable, twice; very probable, twice; likely, twice; 'it may be maintained with certainty,' once; 'this may be certainly assumed,' once; 'we cannot analyze this book in detail with any certainty, but I think it is tolerably certain,' once. And no fewer than nine lines contain a hearty condemnation of De Wette's view, that 'the various parts of Leviticus were added gradually by different compilers.' 'This supposition,' he says, 'is quite inadmissible, and has been tacitly retracted even by De Wette himself.' Here, then, are thirteen 'probables' in about seventy lines. For any practical purpose the reasoning is absolutely worthless. A 'probable' every five or six lines may prove a writer's inability to make up his mind; it can never lead to definite and sure results. And yet Bleek, whose wide knowledge of the subject is universally recognised, is a model of modesty and fairness in comparison with others who know much less.

The book of Leviticus, like most of Exodus, and especially

<sup>1</sup> *Introd.* i. 310, 311 (Leviticus). So in 4th ed. Wellhausen, § 55 (117).

like Deuteronomy, contains the record of a brief space of time. While Exodus, from the twelfth chapter to the end of the book, narrates the events and the legislation of little more than eleven months, Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain the history of but one month each, at the beginning and at the end of the march to the Promised Land. What Leviticus does for the scientific or learned class, Deuteronomy does for the people generally; each of them provides a handbook of rights and duties. In both cases the time seems to be the same, though Lev. xxv. 32-34 may have anticipated a law afterwards given by the lawgiver (Num. xxxv. 2). If any one finds cause for surprise at the rapid march of events in the later book, he will be equally surprised at the rapidity in the earlier. Or, if he entertain suspicions of undue crowding in the story of the one book, he must be prepared to admit similar suspicions in considering the other. A more cautious reader will rather feel disposed to regard the month of the one book as supporting the historical accuracy of a month in the other. No writer of romance, or unhistorical history, would be so blind as to repeat an invention which would betray the inventor.

Where Exodus ends, Leviticus begins; where Leviticus ends, the book of Numbers begins. An order is observed which indicates unity of design, if not of authorship. By failing to see this order, and by arguing from facts which have no existence, Bleek and Graf, and many others, have done grievous injustice to the author of the Pentateuch. Exodus ends with the setting up of the tabernacle. After preparing it and its furniture, the builders handed the whole over to Moses. He was to officiate as the high priest at first, for the priest's due from a sacrifice at the consecration of Aaron and his sons is specially assigned to him (Ex. xxix. 26). But the Levites proper, or the rest of the tribe, are not mentioned in Exodus as priests' assistants, nor even in the singular passage, xxxviii. 21. When the children of Levi are found in its pages,

the meaning is clear. The writer is speaking of the tribe as a whole, not of a part of it. 'The families of Levi' occur twice, 'all the sons of Levi' once, and 'the sons of Levi' twice. Not a word is said about part of the tribe becoming priests' assistants, although this is assumed by many theorists. Nor are arrangements made in Exodus for taking the tabernacle down. Leviticus finds it standing; but priestly sacrifice requires a law-book for its regulation. Leviticus supplies that want. It deals chiefly with priestly duties; indeed, the word priest occurs nearly one hundred and eighty times. Of a distinction among the members of the tribe of Levi the book does not give the remotest hint. The word *Levite* occurs four times in a short section of three verses, and includes both priests and priests' assistants, in short, the whole of the tribe (Lev. xxv. 32-34). Leviticus ends with the tabernacle standing and priests officiating. The book of Numbers makes a step forward. It contains the arrangements for taking the tabernacle down, and for packing and carrying its furniture. Not a word has been said on these points before. Then also comes into view, for the first time, the distinction between *priests*, sons of Aaron, and *Levites*, or the rest of the tribe of Levi. It is given in Num. iii. 5-13, and is made the foundation of duties, which are fully detailed in two or three of the following chapters. Elsewhere the distinction is not broadly drawn. It is assumed, and it is built on in Deuteronomy; but it is not again broadly repeated there. Leviticus insists on every animal slain for food, 'in the camp or out of the camp,' being brought to the tabernacle door, and presented there as a sacrifice (Lev. xvii. 5). Deuteronomy advances a step farther. Wherever the animal was slaughtered in the country of the twelve tribes, it was to be counted a sacrifice, and part of it was to go as a tax, or offering, to the priests (Deut. xii. 15). Such, then, is the order of events in these books. Unless we keep it in sight, mistakes are certain to arise. But such is not the view given by modern criticism.

Speaking of Deuteronomy, Bleek (Wellhausen), § 62 (124), says: 'The Levites always appear in the preceding books, in a subordinate position only, as servants of the temple.' As they never so appear in Exodus and Leviticus, if, indeed, the rest of the tribe, as distinguished from the priests, appear in them at all, the grossness of this blunder might well shake all confidence in other results of the same writers.

The book of Numbers is distinctly said to consist of two halves, with a long interval of years between. The one half, embracing the first nineteen chapters, belongs to the very beginning of the wilderness wanderings. The other half, or the remaining seventeen chapters, unquestionably belongs to their close. A gap of about thirty-eight years exists between these two halves. This gap is as great a source of offence to critics, as the rapid movement in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. It ought not to have been. No true historian would have allowed it to stand in his book without a bridge across, without plain intimation given that the chasm was there, and that no effort would be made to fill it up. Therefore it is argued the book of Numbers cannot be the handiwork of Moses, nor of any one who followed him through the wilderness.<sup>1</sup> It may have been compiled three or five or ten centuries afterwards by an author, who strung together written pieces, which he found floating down the stream of time far apart, or who invented most of the book out of a lively imagination. Now it is not easy for any one, who knows the many gaps which exist in historical books without even the semblance of a bridge across, to comprehend this argument. If the writer of the book of Numbers considered it necessary to bury in oblivion the events of these thirty-eight years, he only did what every other writer would have done. These Hebrews had had their chance, and had thrown it away. Politically they were dead men in the eye of the historian. Even their children did not receive the rite of circumcision,

<sup>1</sup> Bleek (Wellhausen), § 28 (90).

the seal of the covenant. Civil death had passed on the camp of Israel (Josh. v. 5). A generation would elapse before they would sleep in their graves; but to record their lives, their doings, their hopes, would have been a barren waste—a record of a race that had been effaced from the world. Lightning had struck the stock of the tree. A young shoot was growing up: thirty-eight years would be required before the blasted trunk would decay, and the young shoot attain to its most vigorous growth. Moses refused to write the history of the lightning-struck stock. The thread of the narrative could only be resumed when the chance, which the parent stock had thrown away, should be again given to its better offspring. Most justly, therefore, does the chasm exist, for the men, whose deeds would have been recorded, were dead men in the eye of the law, condemned to life-long imprisonment in that wilderness peninsula. The long gap, instead of being a proof of unreality in the history, proves, on the contrary, a deliberate design in the author.

But a gap in the history of Israel, or indeed of any nation, is not an unusual thing. Coming down to time which may be called recent and well known, we find two gaps of large extent following each other in the history of the Hebrews. From the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to the return of the exiles in the reign of Cyrus, is an interval of about forty-seven years. The story of Daniel does not fill it up in any way; nor has Jeremiah or Ezekiel done much to bridge it across. Another gap, as wide, follows, stretching from the building of the second temple (536–517 B.C.) to the appearance of Ezra at Jerusalem (460 B.C.). This wide gap of more than fifty years begins at the last verse of Ezra's sixth chapter, and ends with the first verse of the seventh. No indication of this great width is given to a careless reader, not a shadow of bridge spans the chasm to his eye, for the one chapter follows the other with the ordinary note of a continuation, 'Now after these things.' The argument is therefore worth-

less, which relies on the thirty-eight years' gap in the story of the wilderness wanderings.

With as little reason can the story of the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day be twisted into a proof of the late compilation of the book of Numbers.<sup>1</sup> It begins thus: 'While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day.' The note of time, 'While they were in the wilderness,' seems to indicate that the story must have been written when they were out of the wilderness. There is no room for doubt on the subject. There is no discovery here; far less is there a proof of the late editing or compiling of the book. But there is a very satisfactory proof of the mis-handling to which the critic has subjected the author; for the latter distinctly states that the book was written or published in the plains of Moab, by Jordan side, near Jericho.<sup>2</sup> It was therefore strictly within the author's right, if the circumstances of the case did not require it to be his duty, to say that the story of the man gathering sticks happened while the people were in the wilderness. The incident did not take place in a well-timbered land, such as Israel was then occupying. It happened where bushes were few in number. The man could not have pleaded necessity in the plains of Moab. But he could have made a good case on that plea in the wilderness. And yet the plea did not avail, for 'all the congregation brought him without the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.' By putting ourselves in the author's place, and viewing things as he may be thought to have viewed them, we are more likely to get at the real truth of his story than by heaping 'perhaps' on 'probable,' and 'very probable' on 'more likely,' till we raise a scaffolding high as the heaven, but with foundations on a quicksand.

<sup>1</sup> Bleek (Wellhausen), § 19 (81); Num. xv. 32-36.

<sup>2</sup> The Pentateuch was not written in the wilderness, for the author of that work distinctly states that three-eighths of the legislative part were written after the Hebrews left the wilderness (Num. xx.-xxxvi.; Deut. i.-xxxiv.).

A clear proof of disagreement between two sets of laws in the book of Numbers is found in the age at which the Levites were ordained to begin their service. In one place the beginning age is fixed at thirty, and the age for leaving off work at fifty. But in another passage, separated from the former by nine or ten pages, the beginning age is fixed at twenty-five, and the Levites above fifty continue still to 'minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge' (Num. viii. 24-26, iv. 47). These two sets of laws were given within a few days of each other. The first is thought to be Mosaic, therefore the other cannot be. Such is the argument, such is the large conclusion deduced from the apparent change of thirty to twenty-five. But the argument is not fairly stated when the beginning age only is looked at. If exception be taken to it, exception must also be taken to the change in the age assigned for leaving off work. Fifty years is stated to have been that limit; but men who were older were consecrated, and remained in office as Levites, precisely as were also men under thirty. Fifty and thirty were the limits of age for work in fetching and carrying; but men, who were exempted from this work because they were over fifty, were consecrated to the office. In the same way, men under thirty were consecrated to the office, even before the work was assigned to them. It was a natural arrangement to give young Levites five years of an apprenticeship before they commenced their service, whether that apprenticeship was limited to acquiring a knowledge of the law, or was extended to occasionally helping in the work. Nor was the service regarded by them with a light heart. Provision had to be made for one family of the Levites, 'that they may live and not die when they approach unto the most holy things.' But if a reader of the law-book refuses to accept this reconciliation of a divergence of its statement, and if that divergence bulk so largely in his eyes as to hide the countless proofs which the legislation furnishes otherwise of



its Mosaic origin, he can only be urged to carry the same uncompromising spirit into the study of other histories and other legislations. He will then find them all sinking beneath his feet.

Perhaps the strangest of all the objections, advanced against the Mosaic origin and authority of the legislation, is drawn from the names given to the cardinal points of the compass. 'There are phrases,' it is said, 'which prove quite unambiguously that the Pentateuch was written in Canaan. In Hebrew, the common phrase for "westward" is "seaward," and for southward, "towards the Négeb." The word Négeb, which primarily means "parched land," is in Hebrew the proper name of the dry steppe district in the south of Judah. These expressions for west and south could only be formed within Palestine. Yet they are used in the Pentateuch, not only in the narrative, but in the Levitical description of the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. xxvii.). But at Mount Sinai the sea did not lie to the west, and the Négeb was to the north.'<sup>1</sup> Had these phrases been carefully examined, the results arrived at might have been different. The word *Négeb* occurs ten times in Numbers and twice in Deuteronomy. Every one of these passages will bear the rendering *Steppe country* or *wilderness*, without detriment to the meaning. Our translators have always used the word *south* for *Négeb*. In this they are probably not correct; but the Hebrew term might have been allowed to stand as the name of a known district, and not as the name of a quarter of the heavens. In Leviticus the word never occurs at all. In Exodus it occurs five times altogether; but in four of them it is treated as a word of doubtful meaning. Only once does it stand by itself, without another word to give it clear definition. As the Hebrews looked towards the rising sun, that is, eastward, when naming the points of the compass, their name for south was Teyman, or *the right hand*. Now this word occurs as often in the legis-

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 323.

lative portions of Exodus as the word Négeb. But that is of small consequence. Four times the designation runs, 'the south side southward' (Ex. xxvi. 18); in the fifth passage (Ex. xl. 24), there is no necessity for thus limiting Négeb. But 'the south side southward' is literally 'the Négeb towards the right hand.' That there might be no mistake about the meaning of Négeb, the lawgiver added another term clearly to define it. About that term there could be no doubt—towards the right hand. A clearer proof could not be given of his fear lest the word, which his countrymen had brought with them to Egypt from Canaan, might cause confusion, nor a clearer proof of the means he took to avoid that source of error. The use of the word Négeb is therefore an indication of the wilderness origin of the book, in which the meaning of it is so carefully defined.

But even though there had not been this careful use of the word Négeb, we should still have had to ask what language the Hebrews took with them to Egypt, and continued to speak there. Beyond doubt it was the Hebrew tongue. And if they took down with them names for the cardinal points, they would continue to use these names, although the words had ceased to have the same accurate meaning which they had to residents in Palestine. In the same way they continued to call the first month of their year by a name appropriate to the greatest part of Palestine—Abib, or green ear of corn, although during their stay in Goshen the harvest had probably been ready, if not gathered, before that month began.<sup>1</sup> Nothing else could have been expected of a people who were speaking a language which their fathers had used for ages. But even the word Négeb meant other things than the dry steppe in the south of Judah. It is used of Egypt as being the south land to Palestine, and it is also used to express the

<sup>1</sup> See Ex. ix. 31: 'The barley was in the ear,' a considerable time before Abib. Fields in Egypt are ready for reaping in March. But in Palestine barley harvest is a month later.

south quarter, without the slightest reference to any steppe, as, 'The kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south (Négeb) of Chinneroth,' that is, south of the Sea of Galilee (Isa. xxi. 1; Josh. xi. 2). Most justly, then, may we dismiss the objection as neither fully and fairly stating the case, nor as having any weight even if it did.

But what is thus believed to be an insurmountable objection to the reality of the legislation, becomes an unanswerable proof of its antiquity. Ezekiel, when sketching with a free pen the temple which was to be built on the ancient site, speaks twice of 'the side of the south southward,' or, 'the side of the Négeb southward.'<sup>1</sup> There was no call on him to add *southward* after Négeb. He was in Babylon, far to the north of Judah and its dry steppe, at the time of drawing up that sketch. Only one reason can be given for his unnecessary plainness of speech. He was echoing or copying the words which were used in describing the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Nowhere but in Ezekiel's writings, and in the Pentateuch, do these strange words, 'The side of the south southward,' occur. One author clearly borrowed the phrase from another. If the Pentateuch was the book in which it first occurred, the borrowing of it by Ezekiel is easily understood. But if, as several writers think, Ezekiel used the phrase first, then the addition of *southward* to south becomes a puzzle of greatest difficulty. He had no reason for so doing. He was uselessly repeating the same idea in other words. He was committing a fault of style, which laid him open to censure. But there was no fault and no censure, if he was echoing, as he unquestionably was, the words of an ancient and much esteemed author.

But the prophet gives a curious and convincing proof of his indebtedness to the Pentateuch. 'The south side southward'

<sup>1</sup> The word 'side' is very ancient (Amos iii. 12). Its occurrences elsewhere are singular: Exodus 15 times, Leviticus 6, Numbers 6, Joshua 6, Jeremiah 4, and Ezekiel 47 times. No one can read the north, south, east, and west in Ezekiel (xlv.-xlvii.) without feeling that he is copying Exodus and Numbers.

was an archaic phrase, which a reader and imitator of ancient books was entitled to borrow. 'The east side towards the sun-rising,' was another found in Exodus (xxvii. 13), Numbers (ii. 3, xxxiv. 15), and Joshua (xix. 12). Ezekiel altered it into 'the east side eastward,' by repeating the word for east. The change of word does not indicate originality. But he rounded off the four cardinal points in the same way, and he stands alone in so doing. He spoke of 'the north northward' (Ezek. xlvii. 17), and of 'the west westward' (Ezek. xlv. 7). He was imitating an old book; he was not borrowing from it. Beyond doubt, Ezekiel's imitations and borrowings in this matter show the homage paid by him to the same Pentateuch which we now study.

The labour of examining all the objections taken to the Sinaitic origin of the legislation would be great, and the profit small. No sooner is an objector dislodged from one position than he entrenches himself in another, as little capable of defence. Although the marks of originality and antiquity in the legislation are too distinct to be all explained away, this fact is not strong enough to override the difficulties which beset the narrative, as they beset all narratives of the olden time. Some of these difficulties are historical knots, so entangled as to call for most careful handling. But a set of tangled threads needing unravelling is a different thing from there being no threads to unravel. And when the lawgiver has left us these knots to disentangle, he has bequeathed to us a legacy, the same in kind as every historian of any name has left behind him. An ancient history, free from puzzles which critics labour in vain to read, would not be a history of much worth. To infer from them that the historian, whether Greek, or Roman, or Hebrew, did not record the puzzles which baffle our understanding, or that he did not exist at all, is to confess our inability to discover a solution. One of the most real of these puzzles in Hebrew legislation is the small number of first-borns said to have been found in the camp. Had the

statement been false or fanciful, it would not have been made, for the number is so ridiculously small as to carry with it a conviction of our use of words not being the same as the historian's. The number of men above twenty years of age in the camp was 603,550, but the number of first-born males among them, counted from a month old and upwards, was only 22,273. Practically, according to Bunsen, the proportion of first-borns was one in a hundred of the whole population; that is, every family, whatever the meaning of the word may have been, contained about one hundred members. As the proportion in our country is one in five or six, the case, stated as we have stated it, seems a hopeless puzzle. Bleek,<sup>1</sup> who expresses his views with moderation in a matter so little known to us, believes that the statement of the number of first-borns could not have proceeded from Moses, or from a contemporary author. Does any critic fully understand the statement made?

But the case is far from being so hopeless a puzzle as it looks. We have only a part of the story, not the whole. A writer acquainted with figures, as the author of the book of Numbers was, would evidently have seen the inaccuracy of the figures, if they had been really wrong. If they had been correct, according to his way of regarding things, he would never have thought, when writing the narrative, of the likelihood of strangers looking at the figures in another way, and deducing from them an impossible result. The case seems so clear against the accuracy of the numbers, that a fear arises, lest we be putting on words other meanings than those put on them in the Hebrew camp. A change of meaning, insensibly creeping in, may cause grievous miscalculation in the reckoning. And the first thing which ought to infuse caution into a reviewer of this passage, is the change of front presented in the numbering of the Levites, without a word of explanation. At first they are set down as number-

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction*, § 57 (119) g.

ing in all 22,300, reckoned from a month old and upwards; but the sum total is suddenly changed to 22,000 (Num. iii. 22, 34, 39). Whoever considers the difficulty, cannot think to remove it by regarding the change as springing from the common wish to use round numbers. Instead of being a solution, this is an insult to the good sense of both ancient author and modern reader. For 22,300 is itself a round number quite as much as 22,000. Besides, the exact number of first-borns among the other tribes was 22,273, a very odd figure to give. Apparently they are fewer by 27 than the Levites (22,300); but really they turn out to be more by 273 (22,000). For each of these 273 a sum of five shekels had to be paid. View this matter as we may, we must come to the conclusion, not that the author has made a mistake, but that we cannot fully understand his words, since the whole story has not been told.

With this clue in our hands, we should have no difficulty in threading our way through the narrative. The traditional altar-service among the Hebrews was to undergo a change. The honour of acting as priests and altar servants, which had belonged for ages to a class, then well defined, and called *First-borns*, was irrevocably transferred to others—the sons of Levi. We do not know precisely who had enjoyed the rights and honours of priesthood till this time; in one passage they are said to have been ‘young men of the children of Israel;’ in another they are simply called *priests* (Ex. xxiv. 5; xix. 22). They are generally allowed to have been *Bechorim* or *First-borns*. But the transference of priestly honour was made without their consent being asked. The change was resented, was fought against, and was never fully acquiesced in, though it was sanctioned by the clear voice of Heaven. Every time we read, as we frequently do, ‘The priests the sons of Levi,’ it seems as if a warning finger were lifted against using some other phrase, such as ‘The priests the first-borns.’ ‘Priests,’ then, continued to be a word which,

even in the days of David, seems not to have lost its ancient meaning of *noble* or *prince*. By this transference of honours, the Levites got what the deprived class lost. The former were exchanged for the latter. All that we know about the men who were deprived of their rights is their name *First-borns*. But the same word may be a title of nobility for a few, as well as a common name for many. Our own word *chief*, in the same way, may mean one man in a multitude, or many, according to the context. Clear though this is to us, it is not always clear to foreigners, and might perplex them in reading the history of our island, especially of the Highlands of Scotland. If, then, *first-borns* had two meanings, a narrow and a wide, our misunderstanding of the passage may be due to a simple cause. Changes came over the meaning of the words 'pillar' and 'priest,' till they were used in two senses widely different. 'First-born' appears to have had a similar history. New laws and new arrangements were causing changes in language, which were destined to give scholars trouble in after ages. It has always been so. A reader, who finds a minister of religion with the word of honour *Sir* prefixed to his name in pre-Reformation times, is apt to consider him a member of some noble family. On the contrary, it indicated the want of honour; it meant he had not taken his degree at the University.

It is generally allowed that the right of priesthood belonged to the first-born son of a family. But the number of these first-borns would depend on the number of families, a word of which the extent is now unknown to us. A family does not mean a household, consisting of father, mother, children, and servants, having the eldest son as priest, in succession to his father. On the other hand, there seem to have been a number of such households grouped together to constitute a family, while several families formed a tribe. Twenty households grouped together would give a family of 100 or 110—the number required for one first-born. A priest for every

five or six, such as a family is with us, would make the honour so common as to be little esteemed. We know it was counted a great thing, indeed the greatest thing, among the Hebrews in very early days. It was therefore something uncommon. Supposing the priesthood was an office belonging to a group of households forming a family, and that *first-born* was the official title of the priest, the whole difficulty vanishes. A word has been used in an official sense which could also be used in an ordinary sense. At the same time, it becomes clear how *first-born* or *priest* might also mean *prince* or *chief ruler*.

There are other two points about this choice of the first-borns which seem worth looking at. One is, the small muster-roll of Levi in comparison with the other tribes. Of the latter, the smallest roll is that of Manasseh, 32,200 men above twenty years of age. But in Levi there cannot have been above a third part of that number. It may be that the fury of Pharaoh's persecution fell chiefly on Levi's sons. Another point to be observed is this. While a reason is given for numbering the people generally from twenty years old and upwards, no reason is given for numbering the first-borns and the Levites from a month old. Fitness for war is the reason assigned in the former case; the law seems to supply the reason in the latter. Considering the importance attached to circumcision, we might have expected the reckoning for first-borns and Levites to have run from the day on which that rite was performed—the eighth day after birth. But a different reckoning is adopted—a month old. It seems as if this date referred to the presentation of boys at the altar—three-and-thirty days after birth—a round number, precisely as the sum total of the Hebrew armies is put down in round numbers at the beginning of the story, as 'about six hundred thousand men on foot, beside children.' Here, then, is satisfactory cross-examining of a witness. While the book of Leviticus gives no indication of a division of the tribe into



priests, sons of Aaron, and Levites, assistants at the altar, but leaves the duties of the latter to be detailed in the book of Numbers only when the time of their service approaches, the book of Numbers, on the other hand, assumes, without a word said on the subject, the law of presentation at the altar, previously laid down in Leviticus (xii. 4). A coincidence, undesigned and clear, ought to carry weight in discussing the dates and authorship of these two books. They must have been at least carefully revised. If so, a supposed blunder like that of the first-borns, or of the Levites' age of service, must be rejected as unlikely.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ANOINTING AND ADVANCEMENT OF DAVID.

(1 SAM. xvi. 1-xviii. 19.)

THE bitterness of feeling between Samuel and Saul soon became known to the people. A heaviness of heart weighed down the prophet as he mourned night and day over the casting off of his former favourite. But in Saul, instead of grief for errors that could no longer be remedied, there was anger with the messenger by whom judgment was pronounced. The prophet was alarmed at the threats of violence uttered by the king, and reported to him from friends at court. Like many other men who have attempted to thwart the purposes of Heaven, Saul seems to have threatened with death any one who should dare to anoint another as king of Israel. Courtiers and people knew that he would not fear to stain his hands with the blood of Samuel himself, much less would he hesitate to punish meaner instruments who might venture to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Samuel had other reasons to fear violence, if he anointed the worthier neighbour, whoever he might be. Saul was a successful soldier, whom the people had repeatedly followed to victory. Would the soldiers, who had threatened the chiefs of the nation with death for their treatment of Saul at the beginning of his reign, listen even to Samuel, if he proceeded to depose their favourite? Only a spark was needed to awaken into flames the hatred lurking in Saul's bosom. But none knew when or where the spark might fall. During that season of uncertainty, the elders of Bethlehem-Judah were surprised one day by the appearance of Samuel at the gate of their city. He was then

a very old man, whose long and uncut hair had been grey for more than twenty years. A bullock, driven perhaps by attendant Levites, went before him. When tidings of his coming reached the elders, he appeared to be a fugitive seeking shelter among them from the fury of the king. The storm which had been years in gathering was bursting at last; messengers had been sent from court to take the life of Samuel, who, apprised of the design on foot, was fleeing from his own city to Bethlehem. If the two towns lay close to each other, as some may be disposed to infer from the story of Saul's anointing, Bethlehem may have been his nearest place of safety. Respect for the prophet, and regard for the ancient custom, which required a host to defend his guest even to the death, made the elders 'exceedingly afraid.' But they considered also their relation to the king, who might dare them at their peril to harbour the man he hated. There were good grounds for alarm and confusion among them that day. However, the prophet soon allayed their fears. His coming betokened peace, not war. He called on them to sanctify themselves for a sacrifice, which he intended to celebrate to Jehovah in their city. Jesse, one of its oldest people, was specially set apart for the solemnity, with seven of his sons. To see this man and his family Samuel came to Bethlehem. In visions of the night he had been told to anoint one of Jesse's sons to the throne in place of Saul.

By a sacrifice to the Lord he did not necessarily mean a priestly or atoning sacrifice, in which all or part of the victim was burnt on the altar. There is no reason for reading that meaning into Samuel's words. He lived not far from the town of Bethlehem. He came as a neighbour of the elders, and in right of his office as a prophet to teach, or to encourage, or to reform something which may have been amiss. But there is no word of altar or of priest, or of atonement. Mention is made of a feast, to which the elders were invited with Jesse and his sons. 'To sacrifice to the Lord' is a phrase occurring

in Deut. xvi. 2, for a feast at which all the victim was eaten. Those who sat down at that feast were consecrated, as the elders and Jesse were consecrated. The book of Exodus (xix. 10) preserves a record of a similar consecration, even when there was no sacrifice: 'Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes.' A sacrifice in this meaning implied neither altar nor atonement, nor high place. It was a word in popular, well-understood use—a feast.

In this, as in many other cases, the scenes of Hebrew history are repeated after the lapse of several years, and with different men. At a sacrifice in a city, Samuel met Saul for the first time, and honoured him at the feast which followed. Then, also, he informed the young man of his appointment to the throne. A few hours later he poured on his head the sacred oil. More than twenty years after, the same things happened to David. At a sacrifice in Bethlehem, Samuel met him for the first time, and honoured him at the feast. Then, also, he anointed him as chosen king of Israel. Had the two narratives been presented in this form only, modern theories of history would have found in the one a clumsy copy of the other, or in both two versions of the same story. But the circumstances which form the settings around them are wholly unlike. Had these few circumstances been passed over by the sacred writer in his brief narrative, many in our times would have pronounced the two narratives copies of one and the same story by different hands. But this view cannot be taken. Ramah, or a town now unknown, is the scene of the one; Bethlehem of the other. Samuel meets Saul, as it were by chance, knowing nothing whatever about him. But he is told to repair to David's father's house. He is most anxious to see Saul; on the contrary, he is most unwilling to have any hand in anointing David, and, when he does set out on that errand, it is masked under show of a sacrifice to Jehovah. The settings of the two narratives are detailed with such effect

that no writer would dream of pronouncing them the same story, dressed up by different hands. But if the record had been as brief as in the reigns of other kings, the anointing of David might have been considered a copy of that of Saul.

Immediately before the feast, Samuel took Jesse and his sons apart to a retired spot, where, as in the case of Saul, there should be no onlooker save Him whose eyes run to and fro throughout the earth. When Eliab, the eldest of the family, was introduced by his father, the prophet, struck by his handsome presence, saw in him a worthy successor to Saul. But an inward voice pronounced Samuel, uninspired by God, not fit to judge of men. Eliab was not the choice of Jehovah. Abinadab, Shammah, and four other sons of Jesse were brought in by their father, one after the other, but the same inward voice warned Samuel to withhold from anointing: 'Neither hath the Lord chosen this.' 'Are here all the young men?' inquired the prophet in surprise. 'There remaineth yet the little one, and, behold, he feedeth the sheep,' was the answer of Jesse. 'Send and fetch him,' returned Samuel, 'for we will not sit down till he come hither.' 'The Lord hath not chosen this,' was the riddle-like sentence addressed to Jesse by the prophet, as each of his seven sons withdrew. It must have awakened strange feelings in the old father's breast. What the meaning might be he could not tell. Still greater would be his surprise when the prophet refused to sit down to the feast, till 'the little one,' or 'the beloved,' as his name, David, meant, was sent for from the hills. In discharging the duty laid on him, Samuel rises above the apprehensions which he showed on receiving orders to proceed to Bethlehem. He was afraid lest Saul, hearing of his journey, should kill him. To calm his fears, he was allowed to give, as the reason of his journey, a sacrifice to the Lord. But no sooner is he engaged in the work than these fears entirely leave him. The assembled company must wait the arrival of David. At the word of the Lord, the chief men of the city, the boy's

father, and the great prophet cannot sit down to meat till he be present. Were there not whisperings of the reason among the townspeople that day as they talked the matter over? They may not then have connected the honour paid to their youthful townsman with the sentence uttered against their king, and known most probably to them all; but the danger run by Samuel in thus waiting himself, and in keeping the elders waiting for the coming of a boy, is manifest. It is nothing more than often happens, when men of great zeal and of a high sense of honour find themselves compelled to face risks from which they used every lawful means to escape.

Two sacrifices have thus occurred in the history, about the nature of which reasonable doubts may be entertained—the first at the anointing of Saul, the second at the anointing of David. As the word sacrifice is of ambiguous meaning, denoting an offering by priests on an altar, or an animal slain for food, the context alone can help us to the right sense in any passage, or the traditional interpretation of the story. But in these two cases the context leaves the meaning undetermined. There is no mention in them of altar or peace-offering; there is mention of a feast. So far, therefore, the context supports the view we have adopted of a purely festive meeting. But the traditional rendering of the first story among the Jews puts the accuracy of this view beyond doubt. Josephus is our authority. He describes the supper or feast which Samuel prepared; a sacrifice is neither mentioned nor hinted at. In his view there was no priestly or atoning sacrifice; there was only a feast. But his words are different when he describes the anointing of David. He then uses the words for both a sacrifice and a feast. He translates the Hebrew literally into Greek, precisely as our translators rendered it literally into English. But he does not indicate the meaning which he puts on the word *sacrifice*. While he leaves no doubt of his meaning in Saul's case, he does

leave it doubtful in David's. One thing, however, is plain. If Samuel observed only a feast at the anointing of the one, he is not likely to have done more at the anointing of the other.

We are not told Samuel's first impressions of David. But they were not favourable. Every reader is aware of the high place held by King Saul in the affections of the prophet. The inspired record breathes it forth in all the incidents which bring the two together. Nay more, it takes a tone and colouring from the love which glowed between them. From the effect of Eliab's handsome figure on the imagination of the prophet, a reader may reasonably assign to him a place in Samuel's esteem, which would have been as high as Saul's had he been chosen for the throne. But there is not a word said of any admiration the prophet had for David. Perhaps there was no ground for it in the young man's appearance. His hair was ruddy; he had beautiful eyes, and his face was handsome. He was also tall, like some of his brothers. But the rawness of unformed manhood may have been too great a drawback for these beauties to captivate a spectator. Neither then nor in after years does he appear to have held a place in the affections of Samuel equal to that enjoyed by Saul. In all their intercourse is perceived the coldness of duty, but never the warmth of a personal regard. This idea is strengthened by Samuel making no movement to rise from his seat on the entrance of David. In the dialogue carried on between the Spirit of God and his heart, he was the first to speak when Eliab passed in review. But he is the last to speak when David enters. Jesse's youngest son was clearly the one chosen for the throne. Samuel knew this, but he shows no enthusiasm as the youth enters. He was then awakened to his duty by the half-reproachful words: 'Arise, anoint him; for this is he.'

The ceremony was probably performed in the presence of Jesse only. Although said to have taken place in the midst

of David's brethren,<sup>1</sup> these words can mean nothing more than the anointing of David in the town where his kindred and clansmen dwelt. And though the story oozed out in course of years, there is no reason for attributing to Eliab or any of the brothers an acquaintance at the time with the honour bestowed on David. As the feast could not begin till he arrived, suspicion must have been awakened respecting the cause. From what happens every day in ordinary life, the probability is that none of the guesses made came near the truth. Samuel may have wanted a page for a special purpose, or an officer for his household, or a skilful harper to fill a vacant post in his college of prophets. But all the guesses made would be wide of the truth. This much is certain, Eliab became unfairly jealous of David.

From that day the current of the young shepherd's life seems to have changed. Deeds of daring were wrought by him which drew the eyes of men. The lions and bears, that prowled round the flocks of Bethlehem, found in him a hunter bold enough to look them in the face. Repeatedly these beasts of prey fell on the sheep under his keeping. Repeatedly, too, he bearded them, and killed them with club or spear. His courage and success became the talk of the neighbourhood. Men, who knew nothing about his anointing, said Jehovah was with the lad. In no other way could they explain his feats as a hunter. But there was at the same time a gentleness about his bearing, a freedom, too, from boasting, which won for him the esteem of men, who might otherwise have envied a prowess so far above their own. He became equally renowned for his skill as a harper. The same good Spirit from the Lord, which strengthened him for a hand-to-hand encounter with wild beasts, tuned his young heart to poetry and music. In Bethlehem and the neighbour-

<sup>1</sup> This phrase occurs in no other passage of the Old Testament but in Deut. xviii. 2 (Heb.), immediately after the law of the king. Its use here at the anointing of a king is a reflection of its use in Deuteronomy.



hood, David was known as a youth of might and prudence, and as a skilful harper—‘a man of valour, and a man fit for war.’ In the meantime, Saul had sunk into fits of deep dejection. They came only at intervals. While they continued, he was a helpless madman, unable to restrain the passion which possessed him for the time. Gloomy and sorrow-stricken, he sat humming to himself the sacred songs sung by the sons of the prophets when celebrating worship. His vexed heart was evidently going back to those days of young hope, when he joined the bands of singers coming down the hill from evening prayer. Fain was he to be once more what he had been then. And as he brooded over the past, snatches of its sacred songs floated up in his memory, relics saved from the wreck of his hopes. The ghost of departed happiness was mocking him with pleasant memories. But the servants and courtiers recognised an unearthly ring in the king’s music. To them his melancholy seemed the work of an evil spirit. Knowing the real cause to be their master’s rejection by God, they said the sender of the evil spirit was Jehovah. Saul might thus be reckoned the guiltless victim of a lordly and inexplicable act of the great Judge, or a criminal tried in the court of heaven and punished on the earth. The former was the aspect under which Saul’s illness would be spoken of among his courtiers, and to himself. He was unlucky; he was not wicked. But while Saul was suffering, David was rejoicing. An evil spirit sent from Jehovah plagued the former. ‘The Lord is with him,’ was a common remark regarding the latter. The two men were weighed against each other before they met in court or camp.

Saul’s councillors were at last compelled to action. As their master was unfit for business, a remedy must be found for his illness. Acting on the principle of healing by contraries, some of them proposed to provide good music, which might drive away the bad. They told him of his illness, ‘an

evil God's-spirit troubleth thee.' Then they proposed the remedy, 'seek out a cunning player on the harp.' The king, gratified by their flattery, took their advice. One of them was ready with a minstrel's name: 'Behold,' he said, 'I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person; and the Lord is with him.' This praise of David came from a courtier whose word carried weight with Saul. 'I have seen him,' he said, implying personal knowledge of the hunter and poet. Strangers discerned his greatness, although his brother counted him only fit for keeping a few sheep among the hills. Seldom have courtiers spoken so truly, or kings been served so well. Messengers were despatched to Bethlehem; they were told to ask for the son of Jesse, 'which is with the sheep.' However unwilling Jesse might be to expose his son to the dangers of a court like Saul's, there was no help for him but to obey the king. The purposes of God had begun to unfold; earth was manifestly conspiring with heaven to advance the youth to greatness. Selecting a present for the king such as suited his slender means,—an ass load of bread, a skin of wine, and a kid,—Jesse sent David to court along with the messengers. But Saul and his worthier neighbour were not destined to meet as king and minstrel. A prince might honourably descend for a season from his greatness to show his skill as a harper, but it would not have been becoming had a mere minstrel been raised to the dignity of prince or captain. And David was destined to stand before the nation as Saul's equal before he tuned the harp to soothe that moody spirit. On reaching Gibeah the minstrel found his aid was not needed. The city was ringing with the clang of arms; for the Philistines, with a suddenness not uncommon (1 Sam. xxiii. 27), had broken into Judah, and spread terror over the fields. The excitement of action had charmed the melancholy out of the king's mind. War had done what the courtiers trusted in music to accom-

plish. David was not required in the camp; he might at once return home.<sup>1</sup>

David returned from the court of Saul to his father's house at Bethlehem. Every village through which he passed was mustering its men to resist the inroad. When he reached home, the same ardour was firing the people of his native town. As he had seen more of it in the course of his journey than any of them, his heart was more touched with a longing to join the contingent from Bethlehem, especially as he was a soldier of nature's own making. He seems to have asked leave to join the ranks. But his wish to become a soldier was first laid before a family council. As far as can be learned from what afterwards turned up, his elder brother Eliab upbraided him for his 'wrongness' or naughtiness of heart in even daring to put his wishes forward. Perhaps there was the meanness of jealousy in this upbraiding. 'You may do well enough for a minstrel, or to be favoured by Samuel,' was the meaning it conveyed. 'You think yourself a soldier too; but let others mind a business which is too high for you.' When the young men told off to defend their country marched out of Bethlehem, David, as the least esteemed of the family of Jesse, was sent to watch their few sheep in the upland pastures.

Meanwhile Saul, with his bodyguard of three thousand men, was marching to the borders. Every village that he passed poured forth its soldiery to swell his army. So suddenly had his troops been assembled, and so warlike was his array, that the Philistines did not dare to move more than

<sup>1</sup> Although David's art was not required, the writer of the book of Samuel follows his usual course of tracing the story farther on, before he passes from it to other matters. This has caused a difficulty; but something similar takes place in all histories. 'Each of us,' says Horace Walpole, when writing of the Countess of Suffolk, 'knew different parts of many court stories, and each was eager to learn what either could relate more; and thus, by comparing notes, we sometimes could make out discoveries of a third circumstance before unknown to both.' Compare also his note on the passage. Critics seldom think of the *third circumstance* that reconciles two differing versions of the same story.—*Reminiscences*, chap. vii.

a few miles beyond their own frontier. Their plundering had been speedily checked. Drawing their forces together on the approach of the Hebrews, they pitched their camp on a hill, whose height and steepness served them instead of a fortress. Another hill right opposite furnished the Hebrews with an equally safe camp. The face looking towards the invaders was too steep to allow an attack in front. Besides, the open plain of Elah (terebinth tree) lay between the two hills, and rendered a surprise on that side impossible. A stream with steep banks, and with terebinths or bushes shading its bed, flowed through the plain, apparently nearer the Hebrew camp than that of the invaders. The rear of the Hebrew camp was less securely guarded by nature. Though a steep crag on the one side, the hill fell away on the other with a tail of such gentle slope as not to be difficult of access for the lumbering bullock waggons of the Hebrew peasantry. Where these could climb, the light war chariots of the Philistines might act with advantage. The Hebrew king was aware of his danger. In later times, a ditch and rampart would have been the defence provided; but another, equally effectual, could be thrown round the camp with less trouble. Constantly coming and going were trains of Hebrew bullock waggons, bringing stores of all kinds to the soldiers. Some of them were the king's, but the greater part belonged to families which had sent sons and brothers to the war. An officer was appointed to keep this line of defence unbroken, as waggons left and came to the camp. He was called 'the keeper of the carriages' (1 Sam. xvii. 22). However much a rampart so primitive may provoke a smile in our day, it was then a dangerous obstacle to an advancing enemy, and has proved a most efficient barrier even in modern warfare. Arranged in two or three lines with open spaces between, these rows of country carts gave the Hebrews the advantage of hurling their weapons from above on an enemy climbing up from lower ground. A fresh line of defence was ready to furnish a

second shelter should the first line be forced. Alexander the Great once led his horsemen against a triple line of waggons 'on a hill-top not precipitous on all sides.'<sup>1</sup> Although the foe thus assailed was only the armed people of a city in the Punjab, their rampart proved an effective barrier to his advance. He would have been driven back had he not dismounted and led forward the infantry. The energy of the Hebrew king involved the Philistine chiefs in difficulties. Knowing the danger of assaulting his camp in front or in rear, they found themselves reduced to inaction. Should they risk a march into Judah, flying bodies of Saul's army might carry fire and sword to the gates of their principal towns. Unless, then, the Hebrews could be tempted to quit their hill fortress, the Philistines could not venture to penetrate into the heart of Judah, while it would be a disgrace to return home without striking a blow. Baffled in their plans, and seeing no other way of honourable escape, their leaders had recourse to a device that was often practised afterwards. They proposed to decide the war by single combat.

In the army of the invaders was a man of gigantic size, called Goliath of Gath. He was well known to the Hebrews. From his youth up he had been skilled in deeds of arms, mostly in wars waged with King Saul. The Hebrews spoke of him as 'the Philistine,' and 'the Man.' As nearly as we can judge, he was about eight and a half feet high, or a foot and a half taller than the great King Porus, whom Alexander conquered on the banks of the Indus, and whom the Greeks admired for his size and beauty.<sup>2</sup> Whether Goliath's stature

<sup>1</sup> Arrian, *Anab.* v. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Arrian, v. 19. 'Three of the most remarkable men of the century gave a reception on Friday night at the Royal Aquarium, and were visited by many persons interested in anthropology. The giant Chang, a tea merchant of Pekin; Brustad, a tall Norwegian; and Che-mah, described as "the Chinese dwarf, the smallest man in the world," received their friends, and being not much given to talk themselves, had their history related for them by a showman. It appears that Chang is the largest giant in existence, that he stands 8 feet 2 inches, and is

was measured with modern accuracy, or whether it was the fighting height from his brazen shoes to the top of his helmet, we are not informed, nor does it much matter. He was a giant, and wielded a giant's might, with probably the smallness of mind that often attends vast bulk of body. He was covered with a coat of scale-armour, 5000 shekels or 230 lbs. in weight. As they were exceedingly burdensome under a Syrian sun, his helmet and shield were carried by an armour-bearer. Without a war-chariot, he would have been as useless in battle as a heavy armed knight five centuries ago without his war-horse.<sup>1</sup> To walk was a trouble to this weighted giant, while an attempt at running was almost sure to be destruction. But, as we have seen, chariots were valueless against the skill shown in pitching the Hebrew camp. Goliath's heavy spear is compared to an Eastern weaver's beam, or to a pole not half the length of a telegraph post, while its iron head weighed nearly 20 lbs.<sup>2</sup> Strapped across his shoulders was a short javelin for throwing to a distance, and picking up again as the enemy's line was driven back. It is called a target in our version, and was of solid brass. He expected to have little use for it.

highly educated, speaking five different languages, including English, which last he speaks very well, but with the well-known sing-song of the Chinaman. He is 8 feet high without his boots, he measures 60 inches round the chest, weighs 26 stone, has a span of 8 feet with his outstretched arms, and signs his name without an effort upon a signpost 10 feet 6 inches high. Next to Chang, and next by no long interval, stands Brustad, about 7 feet 9 inches high, very muscular, very broad-backed, having as great a girth of chest as Chang, and a wider span in proportion to his height. He has a low forehead, but speaks English fairly well. His ring is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ounces in weight, and a penny goes easily through it. To grasp his mighty hand in greeting is like shaking hands with an oak tree. His weight is 28 stone, greater than Chang's, for his bones are more massive. His age is 35. Che-mah, the dwarf, gives his age as 42, sings a Chinese elegy, describes himself with much fluency and variety, and as his height is only 25 inches, appears to be what he is described, the smallest man in the world.—*Times*, 14th June 1880.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Plutarch's account (*Demetrius*, 21) of Alkimos, who wore a panoply of two talents, or about 4000 shekels weight.

<sup>2</sup> 'His spear's head six hundred shekels of iron.' Care must be taken to place the commas so in English as to bring out the sense of the Hebrew. 'His spear's head (six hundred shekels) of iron.'

He made the mistake of not having it handy for throwing; the time required to disengage it from its fastenings would have given an active enemy an irretrievable advantage. Goliath was got up for effect more than really equipped for battle. He was a grand show, that struck dismay into soldiers who had seen him as a mounted warrior in former campaigns. A fresh eye would pick out a joint in his harness, through which a weapon might reach his heart. Was tradition to prevail, or was a change of tactics at hand in these border wars?

The appearance of this well-known soldier on the plain spread terror among the Hebrew skirmishers. The petty battles, in which outposts or adventurers engaged, stopped at once: the Philistines giving way to their great champion; the Hebrews, from dread of his prowess, crossing the stream or retreating up the hill. Goliath's shouts overtook the latter in their flight: 'Why are ye come out to set the battle in array? Am not I the Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.' He smiles to himself at the thought of being slain by a Hebrew. 'Kill me,' he cries, and 'we shall be your servants;' not 'the Philistines,' nor 'my people,' but 'we,' as if his fall were a thing to be put out of view. 'I reproach the armies of Israel this day,' he added; 'give me a man that we may fight together.' A terrible dread seized the Hebrew army. The giant had put them in a difficulty before the world. Brave men, who would cheerfully have gone to death in a general battle, shrank from the same danger in a single-handed encounter with the giant. Their country's freedom perished with failure; and their people's honour. With all, save very few in any age or nation, the risk could only weaken the hands in a combat weighted with such momentous issues.

Day by day, about nine o'clock in the morning, and four in the afternoon, the giant appeared to repeat his reproach. He was doing to Israel and its king what Nahash did—putting a reproach on All-Israel. It was a parade of war, a boasting of undisputed prowess. For well-nigh six weeks the defiance was given, but no one took up the gage of battle so boastfully thrown down. Saul and the Hebrew chiefs felt the affront. To encourage volunteers for the fight, the king even offered his daughter in marriage to a successful champion, and immunity for his family from taxation and service. But the offers were made in vain; day by day the giant delivered his defiance from the plain, and possibly the last day of his challenge had come. He gave the enemy six times as long as Nahash had allowed them to roll away the reproach. His challenge was not accepted, though every man of might in All-Israel had known of it for weeks.

Meanwhile the provisions of the Hebrew soldiers were running short. According to custom, each soldier had to find himself in supplies, which were usually brought with him, or sent at intervals from home, if the ground they occupied did not furnish them with food from an enemy's stores. As the days of inaction wore on, the trains of country carts, conveying provisions to the army, became more numerous. In charge of one of these the hero arrived, who was destined to strip Goliath of his laurels, and to shed lustre on the Hebrew arms. The three eldest sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite were in the army. Of his other sons, only one was at home, 'the little one,' David. After the campaign had lasted six weeks, Jesse bethought himself of sending provisions to his three sons. He was too old to go himself. A servant might have been sent; but the father, while perhaps wishing to gratify his youngest son, may have considered one of the family a more trusty messenger. David's dream of military service had passed away. Six weeks of the usual shepherd life had dulled, if not effaced, the visions awakened by his journey through



a country mustering its forces to repel an enemy. But the orders of his father to prepare the needed stores, and to set out on the following morning, brought back the past to his mind. His sheep were left in a keeper's charge. With earliest dawn he was driving a bullock waggon towards the Hebrew camp. The load consisted of roasted corn and loaves of bread; for parched or roasted corn was then, as it still is, the staff of life to soldiers, wayfarers, or peasants in Palestine. But David had also with him ten slices of thickened milk or cheese—a cool and agreeable present for the commanding officer. It was part of his orders to bring back a pledge of his brothers' welfare; a proof, at the same time, that he had delivered the supplies. This pledge was a written slip—whether paper, parchment, or bark. If David, the youngest of the family, could write, it is most unreasonable to imagine the elder members of the household ignorant of letters.

Bethlehem appears to have been about twelve miles, in a north-easterly direction, from Saul's camp. At the present day, the townspeople cut down firewood on the road more than half-way to the site of Shochoh, near which the two armies were posted. Almost every step of the road would thus be known to David. Although the rough and hilly path rendered the journey toilsome for a laden bullock, the young shepherd would have little difficulty in reaching the army about nine o'clock or earlier, before the day began to grow hot. On nearing the waggon rampart, he was directed by the officer in charge to a vacant space for his cart. But even at that distance from the brow of the hill, the sounds of war could be made out. The youth was so deeply moved that he proceeded at once towards the army. Both sides had moved out in battle order, as if the end of the challenge to single combat had come. Philistine soldiers were lining one hill-top; Hebrew soldiers another. 'Array against array' was the scene presented when David reached the higher ground. As his duty was, he delivered to his brothers the message he

had brought from home. Whilst he was thus engaged, the attention of the Hebrews on the height overlooking the plain of Elah, was drawn towards the Philistine champion, who was seen once more advancing to repeat his reproach of Israel. The Hebrews who happened to be on duty below fled in terror up the hill-side. Tumult and excitement rose among those round David. Whether it was eagerness on his part to get a better view, or the swaying hither and thither of the crowd, he was separated for a time from his brothers. But he was among acquaintances from Bethlehem. He was as excited as any in the army, though for a different reason. Angry at the patience of his countrymen under the insults of the giant, his heart gave free expression to his feelings. A knot of men, apparently from Bethlehem, gathered round him. The excitement of fear was troubling them; the excitement of indignation was troubling him. 'Have ye seen this man that is come up?' they were asking. 'Surely to reproach Israel is he come up.' The gossip of the soldiers then passed to a proclamation that had been put forth by King Saul: 'The man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.' David heard their remarks and gossip. His spirit was touched with shame at the reproach cast on his people, and with hopes of prizes so easy to be won. But loftier thoughts than of self or country swelled his heart. Turning to the men around him, 'Tell me,' he said, 'what shall be done to the man that killeth the Philistine there, and taketh away reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should reproach the armies of the living God?' The words and looks of the soldiers, combined with the promptings of his own heart, were driving David to contemplate a deed of arms, that would place him at one bound on the pinnacle of a soldier's glory.

The modesty of the young shepherd made him insensible to the greatness of the undertaking; his braveness of heart

despised the danger. But the venture seemed easy of accomplishment. Knowing no fear himself, he was unable to understand in others the weakness of shrinking from duty, or inability to apply the ordinary rules of warfare against unguarded haughtiness. He was thinking of nothing that many another in the army might not as well have done. He was planning in his own mind an easy feat of arms. The least skilful might be able to say he could have done as much himself had he only taken thought. But here lay the breathings of genius. At the first glance David saw the rent in the giant's armour; he looked at nothing else, for he was skilled in a weapon which could enter at that rent. Others could certainly wield the same weapon as well as he; but they lacked the wisdom to see the opening in the giant's mail, or their hearts failed them at the sight of his bulk, and at the boastfulness of his words. Scarcely had he made up his mind to accept the giant's defiance, than his brother Eliab approached the knot of men by whom he was surrounded. The eager words of the shepherd are passing from man to man. Eliab soon gathers their import. He is filled with angry scorn. Not a word of kindness has he for that bold spirit. His heart is not touched by the danger his youngest brother was proposing to himself. He utters no entreaty or remonstrance. He makes no appeal to affection, to home, to an aged father and mother; but with cold, hard-hearted jealousy he upbraids the youth for wrongfully aspiring to things too high for him, and neglecting the few sheep which were his proper charge. Almost in as many words he told David not to make fools of himself and his relations by absurd speeches. The youth listened to these reproaches mostly in silence. The men of Bethlehem knew they were unfounded, and his own heart was not ruffled by upbraidings so unfair. When he wished to join the army six weeks before, Eliab's sharp words might have had a show of reason; but 'What have I now done?' he asked; and then, pointing to the giant

on the plain below, 'Is not that a cause?' Unmoved by Eliab's cruel tongue, he turned to another knot of people to speak to them also in language that left no doubt of his readiness to fight the giant. Eliab withdrew, ashamed to own as his brother the stripling who was thus offering himself a victim to the giant's spear.

The discovery of a willing champion was soon noised throughout the camp. From the men it passed to their officers, and from these to the king's tent. David was summoned to Saul's presence. The greatest warriors of the kingdom were standing round as the shepherd entered. All had declined the honour of vindicating their country's name. For six weeks their manhood had been proudly reproached by a masterful enemy; the only champion who at last offers is a raw, unknown shepherd lad. But what seems ridiculous or out of place to us was neither ridiculous nor out of place to them; for the history of their race was a history of surprises, brought about by means as contemptible. From smallest things in their former struggles with masterful foes had grown the greatest, sometimes by imperceptible degrees, sometimes at one bound. If it could only be said of a Hebrew, 'The Lord is with him,' there was nothing which that man was deemed unable to accomplish. Saul himself could never forget the one step he took from following the oxen home, in the beginning of the week, to the overthrow of an Ammonite horde at its end. Might not this shepherd lad work a deliverance as great against Goliath? The king seems to have been more touched with the youth's modesty than was Eliab. His heart warmed at the bold words David uttered when he stood within the circle of chiefs: 'Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will fight with the Philistine there.' Saul hesitated to accept the offer; for the difference between the men seemed to him too great to risk the chance of battle. 'Thou art but a youth,' he said, 'and he a man of war from his youth.' But

the shepherd entertained neither doubt nor difficulty ; opposition made him more eager. With the simplicity of one who believed himself a favourite of Heaven, he told the king his adventures with beasts of prey in the hill pastures round Bethlehem. Lions and bears pounced on the lambs of his flock. But he never failed to face, or, as he called it, to beard the robbers. And often as he had faced them, he never came to harm. Conquered lions and bears were witnesses to his skill and courage, spoken of throughout the whole neighbourhood. His heart kindled with a generous warmth as he added, by way of clinching his argument, 'The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the paw of the Philistine there.' David's words were ringing with victory. All that was good in Saul caught their generous glow ; 'Go,' he said, 'and the Lord be with thee.' But Saul's second thoughts were his worst. A right royal nature lay on the outside of his heart : a leaven of meanness lurked below. Saul discovered that his own small ideas were requisite to complete David's great ones. Instead of letting him go forth to fight in his own way, and with his own weapons, Saul is so foolish as to prescribe both to the Hebrew champion. He equipped the untrained lad with the coat of mail, the helmet of brass, and the great sword that he wore himself. It was a well-meant act, but the good intentions of the foolish are often the ruin of great enterprises. David walked out from the king's presence in this glittering armour. It was an unfortunate attempt ; his courage was oozing away ; his heart was sinking. Fears, that he had been a stranger to, were coming and going in his breast. Returning to the king, he calmly said, 'I cannot go in these, for I have not proved them ;' and he laid them aside as things he should never have put on. Possibly his return to the king was greeted with remarks from both officers and men that would have disheartened other soldiers. But David knew where his strength lay, if allowed to fight after his own fashion.

Saul's armour could not have fitted David unless he had been almost of as great size as Saul himself, taller by a head than the rest of the people. His only objection to the brass helmet and mail coat of the king was that he had never tried them in combat. His three eldest brothers were tall and handsome. Samuel was even as highly pleased with their figures as he had been with Saul's. In point of size, then, there may not have been the great disparity between the two champions that is commonly thought. The staff, that he laid aside in his attempt to grasp a sword, David took up again before leaving the king's presence. It had been a companion of all his toils; it was a reminder of past achievements, and an encourager to still greater. Captains and soldiers may well have held their breath when they witnessed a shepherd, in ordinary country dress, stepping forth to meet in single battle the mightiest of mighties, clad in full fighting gear. Few of them could fail to fear that the combat would either be shunned by the youth, or would speedily end in his death and their own disgrace. But there was no faltering of purpose in David when his hand grasped his staff, and he saw the leathern wallet slung again from his girdle. Without a look of regret at the shelter behind him, he descends the crowded heights of the Hebrew camp. He had marked the stream from the high grounds; its channel contained all the artillery he required. Neither excitement nor flurry disturbed his arrangements, for he left the heights, and advanced half-way to the battle without completing his preparations. He asked no one for help; he seems to have confided to no one his plans, and he left it in no one's power to claim even the smallest share of his glory. On reaching the streamlet he was lost to sight, for the fringe of trees and bushes or the high banks would screen him from observation.<sup>1</sup> But the

<sup>1</sup> The bed 'some ten to twenty feet wide, with banks over ten feet high, would form a natural barrier between the hosts, and a formidable obstacle to the flight of the defeated. . . . The gleaming torrent bed, and the steep water-

time he spent in making his arrangements unseen would appear to many to indicate unwillingness to meet the giant. The sunken bed of the brook, and the fringe of bushes or trees on its banks, enabled him, at the last moment, safely to shun the combat, without being seen till he was far beyond the reach of danger. But David was not thinking of escape; he was busied about his artillery while those on the heights were impatient for the encounter. From the rounded stones in the deep bed of the brook he chose five of the smoothest for his hitherto concealed sling. It was a work of some time; an ordinary choice would not be sufficient when the issue of the battle was the rolling away of a kingdom's reproach. At last he is seen on the giant's side of the brook. Few in either army could be doubtful of the result, and bitterly would Eliab deplore the evil chance which sent David thither that morning to bring disgrace on him and all the family.

When David cleared the fringe of trees, and stood full in view of the giant, he seemed far less formidable than when seen at a distance, descending the slope of the hill. Then his tallness may have deceived Goliath into the belief that the biggest of the Hebrews had been chosen as their champion, a picked man sought out from the whole nation. But a nearer look of the Hebrew hero inspired the giant with disdain. He was bareheaded; his hair seems to have been auburn or red, and his beardless face showed inexperience in war. Tall and raw, perhaps somewhat uncouth in his gait or looks, David seemed a mockery, not a reality. His beautiful eyes were too far off to strike the enemy with fear of a dangerous foe. The Hebrews, in Goliath's opinion, were fooling him by sending to the combat one who might run away but would never stand to fight. He despised his foeman; he thought there

worn banks, consist of pebbles of every size, worn smooth by the great winter brook which has brought them from the hills.'—Lieut. Conder, *Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement*, October 1875.

was no purpose of battle: 'Am I a dog,' he exclaimed, evidently in the words of a proverbial saying, 'that thou comest to me with the staves?' The sling was hidden over the staff-head in the hollow of David's hand; but the giant saw and thought of nothing save the staff. It was the shepherd's only defence against the throw of his mighty spear. Saul and his captains watched the progress of David from the hill-top. Not one of them had asked who he was, or how he came to volunteer so late in the campaign. Wearied with long waiting, they had lost all spirit and all curiosity. The king himself appears to have been the first to ask who the youth was. Abner, to whom the question was put, knew nothing about him, and none of the officers in attendance were better informed. Evidently the excitement caused by his offer to fight the giant had overpowered every other feeling; the means by which he was brought to the king were also forgotten. An unknown, heaven-sent champion had appeared in the Hebrew camp. As David advanced towards the giant, Saul could only command Abner to inquire who he was. If disaster befell, he might inform his kindred; in the event of success, he would know whom to honour.

Partly from disdain, partly from an idea that the Hebrew king was playing off a jest in sending a raw youth to sham a combat with a great warrior, Goliath allowed passion to overmaster judgment. Raining a shower of harmless curses on David's head, he invited him to approach, promising, at the same time, to feast the vulture and the jackal with his flesh. Clean-picked skeletons of fallen soldiers were lying on the plain within sight, and the threat of sending the shepherd to keep them company seemed to Goliath sufficient to scare David away. But there was no thought of flight in the Hebrew champion. His tongue is sharper and his views are loftier than the giant's—'Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to thee with the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the



armies of Israel, whom thou hast reproached. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand ; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee ; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth ; that all the earth may know that God is in Israel.' A right royal spirit does this anointed king show in his first essay against his people's enemies. Then, looking round on the heights before and behind, topped by crowds of soldiers, he added, 'And all the assembly, this here, shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear ; for the battle is for Jehovah, and He will give you into our hands.' Goliath had the worst of the speaking. His temper was ruffled ; his perceptions were dulled by the passion that troubled his heart. He resolved to chastise the Hebrew's insolence without another word. His foeman was shieldless and bareheaded ; would it not seem something like fear if he, the chosen champion of a warrior race, delayed the meeting with this sharp-tongued stripling till his armour-bearer fitted his helmet on, and handed him his shield ? No, it could not be ; he would go as he was, for the youth would not wait his coming.

Beckoning off the soldier who carried the shield and helmet, Goliath's only safeguards, the giant slowly stalked forward. His heavy armour forbade rapidity of movement. David stood still, to allow his foe to increase beyond recall the distance between him and his armour-bearer. Every step forward brought the giant into greater danger, and David into higher hope. This inaction threw Goliath off his guard. A few steps more, and the Philistine is confident that the Hebrew will turn to flee. But he is mistaken. Instead of turning back, the shepherd suddenly comes on at a run. Men have crossed the spear and the staff in mortal combat before. Goliath and the spectators who crowd the heights believe the Hebrew will be foolhardy enough to try that way of battle. He appears to have no other. But wary soldiers

in both armies begin to see something more in the shepherd than meets the eye. He is cooler than his foeman; he is bent on closing, not on running away. The mystery is soon solved. David has stopped in his forward run: he has also thrown his staff on the ground. The giant alone is near enough to see the cords of a deadly sling flung out from the hollow of the hand, the rapid gathering up of their ends, the loading of the leathern belly with a stone sharply drawn forth from the shepherd's wallet. He is betrayed to death by his own rashness. Neither helmet nor shield are at hand to save that bared head in front or behind.<sup>1</sup> If he turn towards his shieldman there is greater danger than if he face the slinger. His only safety lies in baffling the Hebrew's aim. By running forward, he may escape a pellet, however well shot; but his weight of armour tells severely on both body and mind. It deprives him of that power of rapid action which was essential to safety; it also confuses vision and thought. Were he near enough and had the chance, he might draw the brazen javelin that was strapped across his back, and discharge it at David. But he is afraid to stand still; he is even afraid to let go the weaver's beam which he holds in his grasp. His practised eye was sharp enough to take in all the danger at a glance, but he was not cool enough to devise a means of escape or defence. David was both cool and practised in measuring his advantage. To hit a bird on the wing, to bring down the game of the desert at full speed, were feats he, like other skilful hunters, was accustomed to.<sup>2</sup> But to strike a mark so broad as the great face of the slowly running giant was work for a tyro, not for a practised slinger. If, however,

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew original the words, when translated into English, run: 'The stone sank into his forehead.' But in the Septuagint the same words are turned into, 'The stone sank through the helmet into his forehead.' Feeling the difficulty, they solved it in their own way. 1 Sam. xvii. 50 (45).

<sup>2</sup> 'I was very much pleased with the precision with which my black friend (a tall, fine-looking black fellah) could sling smooth stones: he had no difficulty in hitting a bird sitting on a bush at 40 or 50 yards, and he could throw considerably further.'—Warren's *Underground Jerusalem*, p. 203.

excitement should unsteady his hand, he had other four pellets in his scrip, wherewith to renew the attack. He did not need a second shot. As the giant came on, running towards the slinger, the smooth stone met him, making a deep dent on the forehead. Stunned by the blow, he fell on his face.<sup>1</sup> He was not killed, for the seal-stamp of the stone<sup>2</sup> had caught him when his heart was in a flutter, and his vital powers were worn out with an exhausting run. But he was on the ground, seemingly dead. That was enough for his armour-bearer, and for the soldiers of both armies. The Philistine host broke in disorder; the Hebrews pressed down the hillside in pursuit. Great as was the boastful confidence of the former an hour before, as great was their fainting of heart when their champion fell; while from the inaction and gloom that are fatal to an army, the soldiers of Saul were suddenly lifted to a gladsome vigour, that plucked the fruits of victory in their first bloom. The reproach cast on All-Israel was rolled away that morning as effectually as Saul rolled away a like reproach at Jabesh. But the hero who did the deed was greater than Saul. He wrought a deliverance which the king for six weary weeks had in vain attempted to effect. Faith in his anointing to the throne was the talisman which he bore with him to the battle, and cherished in the secrecy of his heart. What Saul had lost, David had found—the armour furnished by faith in his divine commission.

Running forward to secure his prize, and safe from attack by the flight of the armour-bearer, David drew the giant's

<sup>1</sup> This proves he was running, and so bending forward. At the battle of Tel-el-Kebir (13th September 1882) the same thing was seen in the slain Highlanders: 'The enemy lie dead in hundreds, while only here and there a Highlander lies stretched among them, lying face downwards, as if shot in the act of charging. A few feet only in front of one of the bastions, six men of the 74th were lying, heads and bayonets pointed forward.'

<sup>2</sup> The stone made its mark on the giant's forehead as a seal makes its mark on wax. Josephus says: 'This stone fell upon his forehead and sank into his brain.'—*Antiq.* xi. 6, 9. See also Wilkinson, i. 219.

sword from its sheath. Completing his work by severing the huge head from the body, he was seen with the dripping trophy in his hand, as the Hebrews passed him in pursuit. Abner immediately conducted him with his gory prize to King Saul. What he had begun, others might safely be left to finish. When he and Saul met for the first time, it was not as harper and king. David had then become as much the representative of the nation as the king himself. He was not raised from a menial office to one of the highest in the land. But he sank his greatness, by laying aside the sword to play the minstrel for the king's good. Only the noblest men in the kingdom could thus act. David was known as a soldier before he was known as a king's minstrel. It was God's arrangement, and it was the best. On learning that he was a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, Saul appears to have requested the father's permission to retain David at court: 'He hath found favour in my sight' (1 Sam. xvi. 22, xviii. 2). The march of events, the strange shaping of human ends, described by our great poet as the work of a divinity, took from Jesse the power to refuse. His father's house and the pasture grounds of the village were no longer a fitting place for David; 'Saul took him, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.' His first appointment seems to have been armour-bearer to the king. During the campaign that followed the overthrow of Goliath, the gallantry of the young hero, his modesty and his skill in war, made him a favourite with chiefs and soldiers. Soon he was appointed by the king 'over the men of war.' He became second in command to Jonathan over the three thousand soldiers who formed the king's bodyguard. The three chiefs of thousands would then be Abner, Jonathan, and David.

Among the officers who watched the fight with the giant, and were present at the king's interview with David afterwards, was the brave prince, Jonathan, the favourite of the Hebrew people. No sentiment of jealousy or envy troubled

his great heart, when he saw his own deliverance of the country thrown into the shade by a shepherd lad. Far too noble to be ruffled by a feeling so mean, he was drawn towards David by the earnestness of his patriotism. 'Jonathan loved him as his own soul.' A bond of friendship was formed between them, which neither time nor trouble ever snapped. As this flame of affection first broke forth in the prince's breast, so it continued to burn there, with a purity and strength that it did not always retain in David. Of David's greatness Jonathan made no secret from the beginning. He clothed him in his own garments, he armed him with his own sword, and bow, and girdle. Not a man among the soldiers was allowed to remain ignorant of David's high position ; for Jonathan publicly proclaimed it by presenting him to the army as his own equal. Every one who saw the shepherd youth, dressed in the prince's robe, girt with the prince's girdle, and armed with the prince's sword, knew that he wished David to be as highly esteemed as he was himself. Friendship could not have shown itself in a purer form. What his father promised, and sought to avoid performing, Jonathan performed at once, by recognising David as his brother and his equal.

From the moment David joined the army, Saul's affairs prospered. Defeated in battle and cooped up within their strongholds, the Philistines seem to have abandoned to the victors the spoils of a virgin country. Booty easily gathered and triumph undisputed raised the greatness of David higher every day. When the campaign ended, and the soldiers were on their homeward march, a more signal proof of the position he had won met them at every Hebrew town and village. While the warriors were gathering the spoils of Philistine fields, the women of the nation were preparing a garland for the hero. With timbrels and triangles and with gladsome songs they poured out to meet the returning army, and to offer it the praise that had been got ready against its

coming. With songs and dances, we are told, they formed themselves into two companies, one on each side of the line of march. 'Saul has smitten by his thousands,' was the joyous song of one band; it was answered, probably by the younger women, with a more joyous song, 'But David by his ten thousands.' This harmless play from those whom Saul's victory had 'clothed in scarlet with other delights, and put ornaments of gold upon their apparel,' made a deep impression on all who witnessed it. Somehow it even travelled into the land of the vanquished Philistines, borne, perhaps, by captives of high rank in Saul's train. The songs of a nation rejoicing over victory would not speedily be forgotten by prisoners. Ten years after, these songs of his countrywomen were the means of saving David from the danger of fighting against his own people on Gilboa. But Saul felt more dejected at the songs than any Philistine captives could do. Especially when the army was entering Gibeah, did their welcome jar on the king. His attendants saw there was something wrong. With the return of peace there came also the evil spirit on Saul. The songs of the women roused it from sleep. 'They have given unto David ten thousands,' he said to his confidants, 'and to me they have given thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom?' The fears of Saul had divined the truth. He beheld in David the 'worthier neighbour' who was to become king. As he thought over this fear, his crushed heart saw the 'rending of the kingdom,' thus begun in the women's songs, ending in his murder by David. Saul came to believe in the youth's purpose to kill him and seize the throne. Nothing could convince him of the contrary. Evil men around him encouraged him in this view. But the clearest proofs of David's innocence failed to produce more than a momentary impression. And with this clue to his actings, we can easily understand the outgoings of his madness in the plans he laid against David's life.

The day after Saul's return to Gibeah, his madness appeared in a serious form. He was singing, as at former times, snatches of sacred song, unreal and weird. David was called in to charm the evil spirit by the music of his harp.<sup>1</sup> The two were alone in the chamber, the elder unsteadied by his thoughts, the younger calmly alive to the danger. A light javelin was in the king's hand. Without seeming to notice the madman's motions, David was an attentive watcher. His fingers touched the strings of the harp; his eyes observed every change in Saul. The clutching of the javelin, the raising of it, and the unsteadiness of the aim, were all seen by the harper. It was easy for him to shun the weapon. 'I will pin him to the wall,' said the king to himself: but David bent his head, and the spear flew harmless into the wooden partition. Before the attempt could be repeated, David escaped from the room. A passing fit of madness, it would be said, prompted this outrage: nothing of the kind could happen again. David, unconscious of fault, might be disposed to take the same view. But he would be more on his guard. And there was need; for a second time was the spear thrown, and a second time it missed the mark. 'The Lord is with him,' said the wretched king. A higher power was watching over his rival's life. Fear of this higher power induced Saul to lay aside these thoughts of murder. He removed David from court to discharge in the field the duties of his office as captain of a thousand. Evidently there was war on the frontier. But the change from court to camp only heightened Saul's fears. The young commander became the idol of soldiers and people. Everything seemed to prosper in his hands. His prudence and gallantry were conspicuous in every enterprise. From every tongue came the acknowledgment, 'The Lord is with him.' But while the king, wrapped in gloomy fears, was hidden from

<sup>1</sup> 'And David played with his hand as at other times' [as usual]. The words seem to refer to the past. But this is not all the idea conveyed by the Hebrew phrase, which means, *past or future*.

public view, David 'went out and came in before' the nation. If Saul expected the captaincy of a thousand to draw out in David blemishes of character previously unknown, his spies soon informed him of the vanity of these hopes. By living in the public view, David was only making it more clear that 'the Lord was with him,' the highest honour he could enjoy in public estimation.

Saul had in vain tried two ways to rid himself of David—open violence in the palace, and the lowering of him before the world. His mind, fertile in resources for evil, discovered a more promising means of accomplishing that end: 'Let not mine hand be upon him,' he said to those who could be trusted with his secret thoughts; 'but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.' Accordingly, in an interview he had with David, he put on the air of a man who, while regretting, wished to atone for the past. The reward of David's success in the fight with Goliath had not been fully paid—no arrangements had been made for marriage with the king's daughter. Saul now proposed to pay this reward. 'Behold,' he said, 'my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife; only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles.' David does not appear to have entertained suspicions of plot or treachery. He avowed his unworthiness of the honour; his very life was a small thing to spend in the king's service; he would spare no effort in fighting the Lord's battles. The betrothal of David and Merab took place; the time was fixed when she should have been given him in marriage. But David was not slain in the passages at arms to which his brave heart prompted him during the year of betrothals. Saul's third plan for ridding himself of a rival had thus failed. He was blind to his own interests. Instead of receiving David into the bosom of his family by marrying him to Merab, he gave her 'to Adriel the Meholathite to wife.' It was well for the princess that her father's sins brought no further harm to her, for she is the only one of Saul's family who can be said,



if not to have lived happily, at least to have died in peace. As her sons are called the sons of her sister Michal (2 Sam. xxi. 8), she may not long have survived the death of her father and her brothers on Mount Gilboa.

The fight with Goliath has given rise to many a fight between critics. In 1 Sam. xvi. 21, David the harper is said to have become Saul's armour-bearer; but (1 Sam. xvii. 15) about a page farther on in the story, he goes back to Bethlehem to keep the sheep. Then in 1 Sam. xvii. 40, he appears dressed as a shepherd; and in 1 Sam. xvii. 55, both Saul and Abner know nothing about him. A great difficulty exists here, or there is no difficulty whatever. The former view of the passage has been in favour for many centuries. As long ago as the copying of the oldest manuscript of the Septuagint Greek, not only was the difficulty felt, but an attempt was made to remove it out of the way. That attempt has met with approval in modern times. It consisted in omitting 1 Sam. xvii. 12-31 from the text. The going back of David to his father's house, his visit to the camp, his conversation with Eliab, and with the soldiers, were left out as pieces somehow added to the real story. This solution is accepted as giving the ancient Hebrew account of the fight. The twenty verses omitted are considered a later embellishment, which a blundering editor found current, and thrust into the Hebrew text without thought, or in despair of reconciling the two. Does this solution remove the difficulty, as several critics imagine? It does not; it leaves matters worse than it found them. In 1 Sam. xvi. 21, David appears as Saul's armour-bearer; but in 1 Sam. xvii. 40, immediately after the omitted verses, he appears in shepherd's dress with staff, scrip, and sling. And in the previous verse (39), he avows himself ignorant of sword, and helmet, and arms generally, although he is supposed to have been Saul's armour-bearer. What, then, is gained by omitting the verses? Nothing; but the inconsistency in the

story only becomes greater. David the armour-bearer turns out to be David the shepherd! The omitted verses have actually to be supplied in some way before we can understand the verses which are retained.

Really, however, on a fair reading of the story, there is no difficulty whatever. A writer is entitled to anticipate in his book parts of the story which he intends to relate fully afterwards. This is done every day. Let the last three verses of 1 Sam. xvi. be read on the supposition of the writer having adopted this principle, as he has often adopted it in other passages, and the difficulty will prove to be no difficulty at all. Thus 1 Sam. xvi. 21, 22: 'David came to Saul, and [as I shall relate fully afterwards] stood before him; and he loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me, for he hath found favour in my sight.' After the story of the fight, this sending to Jesse is clearly hinted at (1 Sam. xviii. 2) as a point already related: 'Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.' A view of the passage which reduces everything to order without violence, and without resorting to 'critical subterfuges,' is the simplest way. It is also in accordance with the rules of historical writing, which have been followed in all ages, and which are observed in the book of Samuel. Thus there are two accounts of Abiathar's coming to David (1 Sam. xxii. 20-23, xxiii. 6). But the Greek translators, believing he did not join the outlaws at Keilah, and yet fearing this inference might be drawn from the Hebrew, brought the two into agreement by a slight change on one word:—

1 SAM. xxiii. 6 (HEB.).

When Abiathar fled to David to Keilah, he came down with an ephod in his hand.

1 SAM. xxiii. 6 (GREEK).

When Abiathar fled to David, he also came down with David to Keilah, having an ephod in his hand.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DAVID AN OUTLAW AND AN EXILE.

(1 SAM. xviii. 20-xxvii. 12.)

[THE chronology of the events related in this section may be thus arranged :—

B. C.

- 1066. Fight with Goliath, about harvest-time (April or May).
- 1065. Marriage of Merab at the end of her year of betrothal.
- 1064. (*Autumn.*) Marriage of David with Michal at the expiry of  
‘the days,’ *i.e.* the year of betrothal, xviii. 20-28.
- 1063. Year of inaction, Deut. xxiv. 5.
- 1061. (*April.*) War again, xviii. 30-xix. 8.
- 1061. (*October.*) Flight of David to Gath.
- 1060. (*April.*) David saves Keilah in harvest-time.
- 1060. (*June.*) Flees to Ziph.
- 1059. (*April.*) Is at Engedi, xxiii. 29.
- 1058. (*Spring and Autumn.*) At Maon.
- 1058. (*Winter.*) At Ziph.
- 1056. (*April.*) Becomes king in Hebron, after residing one year and  
four months among the Philistines.

As David was thirty years of age at Saul's death, 2 Sam. v. 4, and was fit for war, that is, twenty years of age, when he slew Goliath, Num. i. 3, the above may be regarded as an approximation to the truth.]

Michal, the younger daughter of Saul, was a woman of a bold and forward spirit. She was not one who would shrink from publishing in the palace her right to become the wife of David, after Merab was bestowed on Adriel. Every person was aware of Saul's promise to bestow one of his daughters on the hero; and there would not be wanting handmaidens to whisper to Michal his praises, and the happiness of the woman who might become his wife. Things fell out as

might have been expected: the story spread through the palace that 'Michal was in love with David.' That love was connected in some measure with the right which her father's promise gave him to claim her as his wife. Rumour carried to the ears of Saul word of his daughter's feelings. Another chance to rid himself of a dangerous neighbour was thus offered to the king. Nor was he slow to seize it. 'I will give him her that she may be a snare to him, and that on him may be the Philistines' hand.' And thus the sunshine of a court seemed again to beam on David. The king spake as his friend; captains and statesmen had a kindly greeting for the soldier. In a few days David and Michal were betrothed. Saul affected satisfaction at their approaching union; 'a second time this day,' he said, 'art thou become son-in-law to me.' His words almost imply a reproach of David for not having married Merab. And the reason is not far to seek. Unable to pay the ransom required for Merab's hand, David had been set aside in favour of a wealthier suitor. Would his success be greater with the younger sister? As month after month of the year of betrothal passed away, David began to fear an adverse turn in his fortunes. He heard whispers of a heavy payment or dowry for his wife. Men spoke to him of the honour of marrying a king's daughter, and asked what ransom he intended to give. David saw the deceit and the snare. Saul, keeping his promise to the ear, was preparing to break it by again asking a price he could not pay. He had neither gold, nor silver, nor lands wherewith to buy Michal. He had bought her at the risk of his life; he had no higher price to give, and if dowry were demanded from him, he let it be known that Michal could not become his wife.

Things had fallen out so far exactly as Saul wished. By his orders, the courtiers threw out hints of the king's increasing desire to have the hero for a son-in-law. Accident brought about these private meetings between them and David; in

reality they were part of the plot. The talk always turned on the dowry. 'See,' they said, 'the king delighteth in thee, and all his servants love thee; so pay the dowry and become his son-in-law.' One after another told him the same story. It was given, as it were, in confidence, and more in the way of hints than direct encouragement. But David had no delicacy in making his want of means the reason of his unwillingness to go forward. The burden of his answer to their hints and words always was, 'You seem to think it a light thing for a poor man to become the king's son-in-law, but I cannot pay him any suitable ransom for his daughter.' The go-betweens reported these answers to their master. They were precisely such as he wished. 'Tell him,' he said, 'that I have no pleasure in the ransoms commonly paid, but in a hundred slaughtered Philistines, that vengeance may be taken on the king's enemies.' The hook was too well baited, in Saul's opinion, not to lure David on to destruction. No sooner was the matter set before him in this light, than honour and patriotism combined to urge him onward. But the time allowed for gathering this ransom of death was brief. 'The year of betrothal was not run out,' we are told (1 Sam. xviii. 26); it soon would be, and in that partly lay the danger. Saul had delayed letting David know the price he wanted, till the time for paying it was almost come. If not paid on the very day, the hand of Michal would be forfeited. Should David attempt to reap the dowry on the fields of Philistia and fail, his reputation would suffer. But, as he would dare almost anything rather than fail, this enterprise of hazard seemed one from which he would never return. Saul was perhaps in as great a difficulty as David. While unwilling to receive him into his family, two members of his own household were eager for the alliance. It was not safe to disoblige either of them. Jonathan, moved by affection for his friend, could use more freedom than any other man in representing to the king the dishonour of making a promise,

which, though perhaps kept to the ear, was broken in its spirit. And Michal's speeches may have been harder to bear than her brother's reasoning. She would have her own way in anything on which her heart was set. If father or friends refused to humour her wishes, she had means of annoyance at her command which might make them glad to yield to her will.

David may have suspected guile on the king's part in this sharp dealing about the dowry. But he had the prudence to conceal his thoughts. Assembling his men, he at once repaired to the frontier to seek among the armed bands of the Philistines, or in some of their border strongholds, the price of Michal's hand. The level nature of the country, and the hatred borne by Hebrews and Philistines to each other, made the enterprise one of unusual danger. Along the borders men sowed, and ploughed, and reaped their fields with arms in their hands, and under the shelter of fortresses or of bodies of troops, to which they could run for safety in a sudden raid. But David and his men laughed at toil and danger. Before the year of betrothal expired, he returned with double the price asked by Saul. The short time allowed for reaping this harvest of death from the Shephelah may not have been the only drawback with which David had to contend. 'A hundred dead Philistines without the loss of a Hebrew life' may have been a more serious difficulty, leading David, as it would do, to risk his own safety with a rashness unwarranted in other circumstances. The marriage of David and Michal could not be put off, after the dowry asked by her father had been paid twice over. But these events only deepened in Saul's mind the bitter conviction of his own rejection by Jehovah. It bore fruit in due time. He disliked the marriage, and would gladly have broken it off at the last moment if he could. Owing to these feelings, Saul declined to receive David into his own house. The young captain held high office at court, and was son-in-law to the king; but he lived in a house at some distance from the palace. Saul

feared the youth who had stolen the people's hearts, his son's affection, and his daughter's love : 'the Lord was with him.'

According to Hebrew law, a man who had been newly married was not called on to go out to war or to undertake any public business for a whole year (Deut. xxiv. 5). He was allowed to stay at home. David's union with Michal was therefore followed by a year of inaction, which gave Saul no new cause for alarm. For that year, at least, his name was seldom in the mouths of men. But these days of idleness came to an end. The storm of war again broke out on the borders, and again a large Hebrew force assembled to drive back the invaders. 'The princes of the Philistines' led the heathen army; Saul, along with Jonathan, David, and other captains, was in the Hebrew camp. While the two armies lay watching each other's movements, detachments of the invaders spoiled the neighbouring country. They were resisted by Saul's troops. Skirmishes were constantly taking place, with varying success; the balance turning now to the one side, now to the other. But though disasters befell several of the Hebrew captains, none happened to David; 'as often as [not *after*] the princes of the Philistines went forth, David behaved more prudently than any servant of Saul, and his name was exceedingly precious.' This success awoke the madness that had been slumbering for a year. Determined to rid himself of this ever-present dread, Saul issued orders to Jonathan and his chief servants to have David put to death. Afraid to raise his own spear again, he trusted to the swords of others to make surer work. The order was given at night, perhaps at the evening meal in the king's tent, and the time of executing it was fixed for the following morning. But Jonathan was horrified at the wickedness. Anxious to save his father from the guilt of innocent blood, he discovered the king's intentions to David: 'Saul, my father, seeketh to kill thee; and now see that thou assuredly beware in the morning to abide in the secret place,

. . . in the field where thou art. I will speak of thee to my father, that I may see his mind and tell thee.' David's place of hiding was thus well known to his friend. Apparently this hiding is contrasted with another hiding, immediately before David fled altogether from Saul's court. The one was a Sabbath-day's work; the other a week-day's (1 Sam. xx. 19; see xix. 2).

Next morning Jonathan drew his father near the spot where David lay concealed. As they walked along, he reasoned with him on the sin of shedding innocent blood, and reminded him of the joy he expressed in word and look when he saw the Philistine fall under the hand of David. When Jonathan said of this deed of arms, 'The Lord wrought great salvation for All-Israel,' he used almost the same words as fell from Saul on his refusal to shed his Hebrew enemies' blood after the overthrow of Nahash. They touched chords of tender memories in the king. No wicked advisers were at hand to take the edge off Jonathan's reasoning. Saul's heart was softened. Leaving him no escape from following the path of right, the prince persuaded his father to utter the solemn oath, 'As Jehovah liveth, he shall not die.' Believing his friend's life no longer in danger, Jonathan then called for David, told him what had passed, and presented him to Saul. And thus, at least for the time, this family quarrel, as shameful as it was unfounded, was healed.

Before the close of the war against the Philistines, things came to a pitched battle, in which the heathen were defeated with great slaughter. This success was mainly due to David. While it brought him the gratitude of his countrymen, it awoke again in the king's breast a hatred which neither the ties of kindred nor the solemnity of oaths could allay. The end of the campaign also brought with it a return of Saul's illness. The same fear of David haunted him; the same wicked counsellors, who had sown discord between them in past years, again gained his ear. Whether by design or by



chance, David was called on one evening to soothe the madness of Saul. The murderous attempt, made in the same place four years before, was repeated with a like result. The spear sank in the wall, and David escaped to his own house. But Saul's fears were not again awakened by his failure. Prompted too, perhaps, by wicked men, he despatched guards to watch the house of David, and put him to death in the morning. It would have been dangerous to attempt an attack by night. The man, whose skill brought down Goliath, was not to be rashly dealt with when he stood at bay. And, in the confusion of night, his craft might succeed in turning the guards on each other, while he himself escaped unhurt. But Saul's own children again crossed his designs. Michal learned that guards were posted round the house, and that her husband was doomed to die in the morning. Probably Jonathan sent to inform her of the deed of blood which Saul had resolved on. He could not venture to visit his sister himself, for his love to David was too well known; but the bearer of the tidings might be some woman-servant, who had ways and means of passing the guards which the prince had not. Michal's short and decided way of breaking the news to David showed no alarm either for his safety or for her own. 'If thou save not thy life by flight this very night, to-morrow thou shalt die.' Some of Saul's children inherited the spirit of their father. Michal was one of them. Her courage rose with danger. David's heart, on the other hand, sank within him. In presence of an enemy, the young man was cool, and ready to run any risk. Struck at from behind by those who were afraid to meet him to his face, his nature shrank from the ignoble contest. Had he been left to himself that night, he would have waited the inevitable approach of death in the morning. But his wife was of another mind. When every sound in the household was stilled, the guards might be expected to watch with less care, if she had not persuaded them to leave a place unguarded for her hero and

theirs to escape. Then was her husband's chance. Providing herself with a rope, she waited with him in one of the chambers on the upper floor of the house till it was time to make the attempt. Withdrawing the casement and lowering the rope, she listened as David noiselessly slipped down, passed the guards, and escaped into the open country.

At daybreak next morning the guards made no attempt to enter the house. They shrank from taking the life of their hero. Their unwillingness to do more than watch was reported to the king, who sent another band, not to kill his son-in-law, but to bring him a prisoner to the palace. Almost every one around Saul felt that if the hero were to be put to death, no hand save Saul's own should shed his blood. But besides the time lost in this passing to and fro, a further start of an hour or two was obtained for David by the cunning of his wife. When the guards arrived from the palace, she pretended he was sick. She refused to let him be annoyed with business, however pressing. With an authority which the wilful daughter of a king can use, she forbade the men to enter the sick-room. They had no wish to see their prisoner, and would have been deceived had they entered. The figure that lay on the bed was a large wooden idol, which Hebrew women sometimes kept as a household god unknown to their husbands, and which they regarded as the giver of good fortune and a happy life. The head was resting on a pillow woven from dark goat's hair, and the body was covered with a garment often worn by David, and perhaps well known. The captain of the guards, believing his prisoner secure, returned with the soldiers to the palace. Saul gave him no thanks for his tenderness: 'Bring him on the bed to me to put him to death,' exclaimed the enraged king. The trick was then discovered. Again there was a passing to and fro of messengers between David's house and the palace, and a further gain of time for the fugitive. Michal was summoned to answer for her conduct. In the

weakness caused by sudden terror, she held up her face to a lie, when she would have earned the purest honour by confessing the truth. 'Wherefore hast thou thus deceived me,' demanded Saul, when she made her appearance, 'that thou hast sent away mine enemy, and he is escaped?' Had she boldly answered, 'Because he is my husband, and I love him,' her praise would have been in every mouth to this hour. But she entered in her own defence a plea that was false: 'He said to me, Send me away; wherefore should I slay thee?' Her defence confirmed Saul in the view he had taken of David's designs. If he could thus threaten his wife with death, he would not hesitate to kill her father, who stood between him and a throne. Michal served her husband in the evening by helping him to escape; in the morning she did him the greatest disservice by this purposeless lie.

After passing through the guards, David made for Naioth on Ramah, the city of Samuel. It seemed his only refuge. Samuel, who was afraid to go to Bethlehem to anoint David, has no fear of consequences in receiving the fugitive. He learns, perhaps for the first time, the story of the king's attempts to take David's life. Soon the truth was placed beyond doubt by the approach of soldiers, sent to bring him to Saul. The prophet met them with the weapons of spiritual warfare. The 'sons of the prophets,' fifty or more in number, were arranged in or near their school or college. Samuel led the worship in which they were engaged. David was with him, at once the cause and the prize of this contest between the sword of the State and the sword of the Spirit. As the troops climbed the hill, strains of sacred music filled their ears. A change began to pass over the hardy soldiers. They disliked the business on which they were sent; they disliked it more when, as each man looked on his comrade, there was seen gathering on his face an awe that betokened failure in their enterprise. Apparently their leader, seeing the looks of his men, went forward to judge for himself: 'He saw the com-

pany of prophets singing, and Samuel standing as appointed over them.' Both he and his men caught up the strains of the prophets, for the songs of praise were well known. An unseen power was moving the whole detachment, as the rising wind ripples the face of the ocean. When they reached the buildings, they were powerless to seize their prisoner. Acknowledging the might of Samuel, they joined his band of singers, and became worshippers themselves.

The tidings of defeat soon travelled to Saul. A second and a third band were sent on the same errand, with the same result. Unawed by these warnings of Jehovah's purpose to shield David, Saul resolved to lead a fourth detachment himself, to vindicate his right to rule in his own land. They halted at 'the great well,' on a shoulder of the double hill of Ramah, which, from the view obtained on its top, was called Sechu or 'watch-tower.' Probably near this well Saul met the maidens at whom many years before he asked where the prophet lived. He was making a similar inquiry on this occasion at, perhaps, other maidens sent for water to the well. Without knowing it, Saul stood on the edge of a charmed circle, within which he should no longer be master of himself or of his soldiers. Every step he took towards its centre saw his purpose and his authority growing weaker. As he climbed the hill, the songs of worshippers arose from him and his men instead of the sounds of war. But Saul did more. On meeting Samuel he cast off his upper garment and prophesied, singing the sacred songs of the prophets. The conflict in Saul's breast between his madness and the feelings that now stirred it ended, as such conflicts often do, in a fainting fit of many hours' duration: 'he lay down naked all that day and all that night.' This cannot have taken place before the crowd in the streets of Ramah, but in the house of Samuel, where none but the prophet and trusty servants witnessed the wreck of a great mind. The people, who heard or saw somewhat of the outer workings of this spirit in the

king, were reminded of a saying once well known in the neighbourhood, and which these events saved from being forgotten altogether: 'Is even Saul among the prophets?'

The family quarrel seemed to be again made up, and David returned to his place in Saul's court. But the wicked men around the king gave the youth no rest. Not long after his flight from Ramah, as his return to court was called, a plan was arranged for murdering him in the palace; the time chosen was a new-moon feast, at which the king gave a two-days' entertainment to his courtiers. Knowing Jonathan's friendship for David, Saul advised his counsellors not to make the prince aware of their design. The precaution proved to be useless. David heard of the plot through some other channel, perhaps through Michal, who lacked neither the boldness nor the cunning to follow up any hints of danger, till she discovered the whole truth. On hearing the story, David sought the help of his friend and brother Jonathan. Their interview took place in Gibeah, and perhaps in Saul's own house. 'What have I done,' he asked, 'that thy father is again and again seeking my life?' He was beginning to lose heart. Scarcely is he rescued from one net than he is in the toils of another. Jonathan was somewhat displeased with his friend for entertaining these suspicions. 'Far from it,' he said in reply; 'thou shalt not die. Behold, my father doeth nought, great or small, without making it known to me; and wherefore should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so.' But David knew the plans of his enemies too well to be lulled into security by these assurances. Calling Jehovah to witness to the truth of his statements, he said: 'Thy father hath said, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved; there is but a step between me and the death designed.' Half doubting, half believing this tale of bloodshed, the prince puts himself in David's hands, and asks how he can best show his friendship. To ascertain the truth or falsehood of the plot, David proposed a plan which Jonathan undertook to follow.

Afraid lest there was danger in the house in which they then were, the two friends withdrew to a spot in the open fields, in which, according to their plan, David would be in hiding on the third day after. It was an archery park among the broken ground on the south of the city, and on the road to Bethlehem. A large stone, or stone-heap, called Ezel or departure, marked the place.<sup>1</sup> In that retired spot they renewed their league of kindness and love. Jonathan spoke as one who had no right to entertain hopes of ever filling the throne of Israel. Sadness, pervading the view which he took of the future, threw a deeper gloom over their meeting that day. According to the plan agreed on between the two friends, Jonathan returned to the palace, while David hastened towards Bethlehem, to be present at a yearly festival of all his relations, to which he had been summoned by his brother. As the distance was only about ten miles, there was ample time to go and return before the third day.

The first day of the new-moon feast passed without David taking his seat at Saul's table. The place set apart for him remained empty. But the murderers, unaware of his absence, carried out their designs as far as they could. A messenger entered the room to summon Jonathan away on business. Abner at once took the empty seat by the king's side; but the victim did not come to the slaughter-house as they wished. Several who were in the secret feared he had been made aware of the plot. The king thought differently. 'Not so,' he said; 'it is a chance. He is not clean, perhaps,' meaning

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Sam. xx. 19, 41, the Septuagint Greek renders the Hebrew by 'remain beside that Ergab,' and he rose 'from the Argab.' The word is supposed to mean a stone cairn (Argob); and several writers prefer the Greek to the Hebrew. But they overlook the changes made by the Greek on the spelling of the word; and they do not seem to be aware of the ignorance of Hebrew, shown in the Greek, when it gave that very word, *ergab*, twice in circumstances which render the use of it exceedingly ludicrous (1 Sam. vi. 11, 15), and once Mergab (1 Kings iv. 34). And they overlook also a clear mistranslation and ignorance of Hebrew in 1 Sam. xx. 3, 5, 19. *Amattari* (ver. 20) (*a mark*) seems to be confounded with Saul's family of Matri, spelled in the Greek Mattari (1 Sam. x. 21).

that he had by accident touched a dead body, or in some other way broken the ceremonial laws. When the guests took their seats at table on the following day, there was still no appearance of David. Saul's suspicions were then awakened. Turning to Jonathan, he asked him the reason of the son of Jesse's absence. The prince replied that he had given him leave to run to Bethlehem to see his kindred at their yearly gathering. The question of Saul and the leave-giving of Jonathan prove that, whatever was David's rank at court, he held command under Jonathan. The king had therefore no reason to find fault with his son-in-law. But his well-laid plans were again crossed. The gloomy madness that had spent its force hitherto on David now turned on his own son. While cruelly reproaching him for his love to the national hero, he let out the real source of his own hatred: 'All the days that Jesse's son liveth upon the ground, there shall be no security to thee and to thy kingdom.' Every one at table must have then seen the true reason of Saul's jealousy. It was the crown itself for which he was afraid. And from other quarters had already come, or soon would come, rumours of the anointing of David, which, magnified by these heartburnings at court, would pass in ever-increasing whispers from tribe to tribe throughout the kingdom. Saul's madness urged him further than was prudent. 'Send and fetch him to me,' he said to Jonathan; 'he is doomed to death.' But the prince refused to act till he knew what ground there was for this step: 'Why should he die? What hath he done?' Lifting his spear, Saul threw it at his son for daring to stem the tide of his rage. Indignant at the insults heaped on him by his father before guests and servants, Jonathan left the room without tasting food.

Heavy at heart he repaired next morning to the stone Ezel, at which he had agreed to meet David. As his movements were likely to be watched, he made it appear as if he were intending to practise archery. A boy, carrying bow and

arrows, accompanied him to the shooting ground. When they neared the stone the boy ran forward, while Jonathan shot three arrows beyond him. They missed the mark, as was intended. 'Is not the arrow beyond thee?' the prince cried, loud enough to be overheard by David, who had returned from Bethlehem, and lay in hiding hard by. These words had been agreed between them as the signal of danger. Displeased, apparently, at missing the mark three times, Jonathan called to the boy to make haste in gathering up the arrows and in returning to the town. His hand was not steady nor his eye true that morning. And if the lad knew, as it is likely he did, what took place at the king's table on the previous day, it would seem to him most natural in the prince, skilful archer though he was, to miss the mark, and to desire to nurse his grief in solitude. When he was out of sight, David rose from the south side of the stone or cairn Ezel, where he lay in hiding. It was the side next Bethlehem, from which he had come that morning. There was not time for much speaking. Thrice, as he approached, he cast himself on his face to the earth before the prince in token of regard. They kissed each other; they wept bitterly; but David's grief, if not more deeply seated than his friend's, found vent in fiercer bursts of tears. In few but weighty words, Jonathan sent him away in peace, reminding him as he did so of the solemn oath they had sworn, to show kindness to each other and to each other's children in all time coming. This interview took place on a Sabbath morning. Within an hour or two after leaving Jonathan, David got from the high priest five of the twelve loaves of shew-bread, newly taken off the table in the Holy Place. According to the law, these loaves were removed on the Sabbath (Lev. xxiv. 8). The month seems to have been October. As the campaign on the borders ended some time before, the new-moon feast was in the fall of the year. But the moon of October, from which the Hebrews are believed to have



reckoned their civil year, was a season of general joy, at which a two days' feast might be held in the palace, or a family gathering in Bethlehem. The labours of the year among an agricultural people were then ended; a harvest-home could be kept with friendly meetings and general rejoicing.

After parting from his friend and brother, David hastened southward to the city of Nob, in the neighbourhood of which the Mosaic tabernacle had been set up. Ahimelech, the high priest, and many of his kindred, then resided there. He was a son of Ahitub, who was grandson of Eli. Whether he was a brother of Ahiah, or the same man with a slightly different name,—a thing not uncommon in those days,—cannot now be determined. As David approached the town, hunger constrained him to seek for food after his journey from Bethlehem and his flight from Gibeah. He was sure of a friendly reception, for he was well known to the high priest, nor had he any fear of treachery. Even though every priest in Nob had seen him at the tabernacle, there was no danger. Holding office from God, and not from the king, the priesthood, when guided by a man of worth, was a barrier against the encroachments of despotism on the rights of the people. When David reached the tabernacle, the high priest was engaged in the duties of his office. Morning worship, which continued longer on Sabbath than on other days, was just over. Ahimelech trembled on seeing him alone and unarmed. He loved the soldier, but there was something in his manner that betokened anxiety; his dress also told of travelling during the early morning. The thought flashed into the high priest's mind, 'He has again fled from Saul's anger; this time he comes to the altar of Jehovah, the next resort after Samuel.' 'Why art thou alone and no man with thee?' he asked. David pretended business of importance, which the king desired to conceal from others. He was not alone, he said; the soldiers appointed to attend him were waiting his coming at a place

not far off. Of the falsehood of the first of these statements there is no doubt; the second was true. Young men who had been with him to the family feast at Bethlehem, and whom he had persuaded to share his flight,—Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, if not others,—were waiting for him not far from Nob. They were his own kindred; his dangers were theirs; his honours would also be shared by them. Safety and hope urged them to cast in their lot with David in this dark hour of his fortunes. But Ahimelech was unable to furnish the fugitive with the bread he asked. Although the town contained not less than sixty or eighty households, none of them could give him a few loaves. The same thing takes place in that country to this day. Often is the hungry traveller surprised by finding it impossible to procure bread for himself and his servants in a good-sized village. But the high priest offered to give David part of the shew-bread which had been removed that morning for the priests' use. He took the soldier's word for it that he could, with a clear conscience, exercise his dispensing power by giving the young men bread, forbidden to all but the priests. 'Although the way or business we are on is common,' David said, 'you safely may.' But there was a spy in the court of the tabernacle watching what was going on. An Edomite, named Doeg, whom Saul had made chief of his herdmen, and who had become a proselyte to the Jewish faith, was for some reason detained before the tabernacle at that time. He drew near as the high priest was giving David the loaves. He did not know the sacredness of the bread, only there were so many loaves given that he spoke of them afterwards as 'provision for a journey.' But he overheard what passed. David asked for sword or spear, as he had hurried away from Gibeah without arms or armour. Ahimelech said the only weapon in the place was 'the sword of Goliath, wrapped in the robe behind the ephod.' 'None like it,' he answered; 'give it me.' But the mention of the ephod, the high priest's sacred dress, seems to have suggested

to David the idea of consulting Jehovah regarding the future. Ahimelech had done this for him before, and willingly did it again. Perhaps, then, the assurance was given, of which we read afterwards, and which seems to have heartened both him and his followers when hard pressed by danger, 'I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee' (1 Sam. xxiv. 4).

Accompanied by several of his men, David sought refuge in the city of Gath, without leave from its king (1 Kings ii. 39). It was a bold step he took in thus venturing into the lion's den, for there were not a few among the citizens to whom he was known by sight. He may have expected to escape notice in the crowd till he should find means of returning to his own land. But if he did, he was mistaken. The attendants of Achish, prince of Gath, heard of the prize that was caged within their walls. Expecting a reward for their zeal, they brought him to the palace. But the same cunning that foiled their champion five years before, foiled them also. 'Is not this David, king of the land?' they ask, when their prisoner stood before Achish. 'Was it not of him they sang in the dances, saying, Saul hath smitten by his thousands, and David by his tens of thousands?' The Hebrew prince was greatly moved by their words. It would have been well had his outward demeanour answered to the thoughts that were then passing through his heart. 'I sought the Lord,' he says, in a sacred song written after his escape, 'and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.' But, unhappily, he did more. Before all in the palace he spoke and acted as if his misfortunes had deprived him of reason. When shut up in prison he scrawled on the doors, and let his spittle roll down his beard. One knows not at which part of these proceedings to feel most grief; at the hypocrisy which was soiling a great name, or at the meanness of a hero who, after having often risked his life in battle, was sacrificing honour to save himself from enemies. David was

suffering from one of those fits of weakness that sometimes overwhelm the noblest of our race. But Achish did not thank his servants for the prisoner they brought. Even though their story were true, he would not have touched a hair of David's head. 'Is it not clear to you,' the king asks, in mockery of his servants, 'that he is mad? Why have ye brought him to me?' Have I not got madmen enough when I have such as you? With these and such reproaches Achish ridiculed his servants, rating them so soundly for their lack of discernment that they were glad to let the prisoner go from the town.

The cave of Adullam was the next hiding-place of David and his men. It appears to have been one of those many-galleried caverns that are found scooped out by nature in limestone rocks. As it gave shelter at one time to not fewer than four hundred men, besides women and children, its numerous galleries must have been of great extent, well aired, if not lighted in some parts from above. In short, the cave of Adullam was an underground city or camp.<sup>1</sup> Trusty messengers soon conveyed to David's kinsmen in Bethlehem tidings of his place of refuge. The news arrived in time to save their lives. His father, his mother, and all his kindred, fled to Adullam. Men of broken fortune, and of a desperate or discontented spirit, also saw in him a leader round whom they might rally with hope of recovery in the world. Because he needed the swords of daring men, they sold him theirs for the safety or the honour which they expected in return. Rumour rapidly spread the news among all in debt and in distress, for whom the charms of life could only be regained by some lucky stroke, that Adullam was a centre at which they would be welcome. It was on the debateable land between Judah and the country of the Philistines, a district in which the unfortunate of both nations would meet as fellow-sufferers, and not as enemies. Debtors who fled from more guilty creditors; aspirants to

<sup>1</sup> See Merrill's *East of the Jordan*, 348.

honours, which they had failed to win, while they had incurred the hatred of the winners; and men whom the law, though not conscience, counted criminals, found a refuge in this no-man's zone. People from Gath and other heathen cities sought safety there—Hittites and Hebrews. Probably some of the best hearts in Palestine were sheltered in its caves and hills, and not a few of the worst. There, in all likelihood, David first met with Uriah the Hittite, Ahimelech the Hittite, and Ittai of Gath, two of whom rose to high honour when their leader became king. Perhaps Zelek the Ammonite, Ithmah of Moab, and Igal from Zobah, joined him at the same time. Outlaws and fugitives of many tribes, heathen as well as Hebrew, were probably in hiding in the district on David's arrival at Adullam. The means of forming a little army of broken men were thus at hand, as soon as a leader with David's great name appeared among them.

David's first step was to seek a place of safety for his aged father and mother with the king of Moab. They could not follow the fortunes of adventurers, who might have to flee from fastness to fastness in deserts or on mountains. Ties of blood through Ruth connected their family with the Moabites. While these could not be disregarded, the Moabite king was also in subjection to Saul, and might be called to account for harbouring those whom Saul considered his enemies. However, Moab gave David's father and mother shelter all the time he was in the hill stronghold of Adullam. But this could not have been longer than eight or nine months. Whether Moab then betrayed them to Saul, or sent them back to their son, is unknown. But the vengeance taken on that people many years after would be a blot on David's name, if there was no betrayal of trust.

Saul was not so well informed of what passed on the borders, especially in the debateable land, as to know that a body of four hundred men had gathered there under the chieftainship of David. Evidently Adullam was not then

counted part of Judah. But he soon heard of their passing through the country to a new hiding-place. While David was uncertain what step to take, Gad the prophet, who had joined the band, delivered to him a message from heaven: 'Thou shalt not dwell in the mountain hold: go, that thou mayest come for thy good to the land of Judah.' Leaving Adullam, he stole through the country with his men to a place among the western hills, called the wood of Hareth. They appear to have arrived there about the end of May. The passage of a band of four or six hundred men, with women, children, and baggage, through a peopled country, could not be kept hid from the court. Saul was told of David's march. Summoning to his presence the chief men in his service, to only a few of whom, perhaps, the reason of David's flight was known, he lays before them what he believes to be his wrongs, and asks their help in the righting of them. The assembly met on a hill (Ramah) near Gibeah; every man was in his proper place; and the king, like a modern Arab chief, sat with a long spear in his hand under the tamarisk tree. 'Hear now, ye Benjamites; even to all of you,' he said in irony, 'will the son of Jesse give fields and vineyards; all of you will he make captains of thousands and captains of hundreds; that ye have all conspired against me, and none of you is revealing to me my son's league with the son of Jesse, and none of you is sorry for me and revealing to me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait as at this day.' Benjamin had got a double portion a second time, when the king bribed his own tribesmen, as he evidently did, by honours and profits, which they should only have shared with their countrymen. But even these large bribes failed to make the courtiers forget the free ways of their fathers. They held their peace at Saul's bitter words. But Doeg, the chief herdman,<sup>1</sup> had not forgotten what he witnessed several months before in the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxii. 9: 'Doeg, . . . set over the servants of Saul.' So the English; but the Hebrew is: 'Set over servants of Saul,' that is, some servants.

court of the tabernacle. He told the story of the high priest's kindness to the king's son-in-law, of the provision for the way, of the bringing forth of Goliath's sword, and of the consulting of Jehovah. The king's rage had now an object on which to break. Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob were sent for. The distance was about an hour's journey. For them the last sacrifice had been offered that morning. But among the reasons guessed for the summons to Saul's presence, David's visit may have been one that never occurred to Ahimelech or his companions. On their arrival at Gibeah, Saul accused Ahimelech of conspiring with David against his life and crown. With a dignity befitting his rank and character, the high priest took the part of the slandered hero. Nobly did he assert his faithfulness to Saul as the king's son-in-law, as one of his privy council, and as an honoured man in his palace. No one, he said, was trusty as David was. Then casting from himself the charge of treason, he reminded Saul that he did not then for the first time consult Jehovah at David's request; he maintained also his entire ignorance of any conspiracy in which the young man was engaged. But nothing could soften the heart of this gloomy prince. He had ceased to obey the voice of God: he was determined to rule as a king. 'Ahimelech,' he said, 'thou shalt surely die: thou, and all thy father's house.' He was bent on reading a lesson to the highest and the most esteemed, as well as to the humblest, of his unalterable determination to punish David and all his helpers. But can he have suspected the high priest of anointing David to be king that day Doeg saw the two together? His mind, full of suspicion, acted on its impulses. On the instant, he ordered the runners or guards standing round 'to slay the priests of Jehovah.' But the men shrank from the deed. Doeg was more pliant. That wicked man slew on the spot eighty-five priests of God, while Saul looked on approving the crime. Nor was his vengeance appeased by these murders. Every living thing in Nob, man, woman, child, ox, sheep, and ass, fell before the

swords of Doeg and like-minded adventurers. According to the story, Saul made a vow of utter destruction against the priests and their city. From that vow there was no drawing back. He did not fail here, as he failed when sent against the Amalekites.

It may seem inconsistent with the Hebrew land laws when Saul boasted of giving his chief men grants of vineyards and other estates. As the country was divided by lot among the people, and as each estate returned at the jubilee to its first owner's family, there was no room for grants, such as Saul made, if these laws existed. But the depressed state of Jesse's fortunes throws some light on the king's doings. He does not appear to have enjoyed the same affluence as his ancestor Boaz. Nor did he stand so high in the town of Bethlehem. Evidently Saul was endeavouring to humble the nobles of the land, and to exalt his own creatures at their expense. By seizing their estates and giving them to favourites, while he let the great body of the people enjoy their property in peace, he would hope to rid himself of dangerous nobles and to provide for clamorous friends. The story of Naboth is a case in point. But there is another way of accounting for these grants of estates. Saul was not the only king who had them in his gift. David also had large opportunities of amassing land, if not of bestowing it on his courtiers. In one case he got a gift from the Philistine king, Achish, which he is expressly said to have bequeathed to his successors—'the kings of Judah.' That gift was Ziklag, with the pasture grounds in the neighbourhood—an estate of great value. But besides, the whole of Canaan was not divided by lot in Joshua's day. Many districts were held by the heathen in defiance of the conquerors; many others, that had been won by the Hebrews, were lost by their children. In Saul's time Israel had again lifted its head. Another Joshua was making his power felt by the heathen in the land. Their numbers were becoming less; their estates were passing in various



ways out of their hands. A similar process went on during David's reign, perhaps also during Solomon's. Large estates in many parts of the country would thus fall to the crown, or could be seized by the king and given to his favourites.

Abiathar, the son of the high priest, alone escaped the fate of his kindred. As he had with him the sacred garment, called an Ephod, when he fled for safety to David, he was probably engaged in priestly duty at a distance from Nob. There was only one place at which he might have been so engaged, the house of Abinadab, near Kirjath-jearim, which was then the resting-place of the ark. The conscience of David reproached him when he heard from Abiathar the tale of bloodshed. The harp which sang the fate of Saul and Abner, of whom one was the author and the other an approver of these cruel deeds, can scarcely be thought to have kept silence over the high priest and his kindred. Certainly the historian has not embodied in his narrative an elegy, like those composed over the less worthy men who fell on Gilboa and at the gate of Hebron. But there was a reason for his silence. An elegy on the priests could have no effect in setting the crown on David's head. Elegies on Saul and Abner, as we shall see, had a political meaning, and served a political end. But David's feelings towards the doer of these deeds found expression in a song, which has been preserved in the book of Psalms (Ps. lii.). He lays all the guilt on Doeg; precisely as he did when Abiathar told him the story: he utters not a word against the king. The latter was no longer responsible for his acts in the same way as was the former. 'Lover of evil above good,' he calls Doeg: 'of all devouring words, of lying above the speaking of right, a sharp razor, a worker of deceit.' The word *lying* in this delineation means *conspiracy*, and is the word which describes the charge urged against Ahimelech by Saul. But the contrast drawn by the poet between himself and Doeg, brings the tabernacle scene vividly before a reader. 'God shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle,

and root thee out of the land of life,' he says (verse 5). How different is to be the poet's fate! 'I, as a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will wait on Thy name; for it is good before Thy saints' (vv. 8, 9). 'Thy holy ones' was a tribute of praise paid to the murdered saints of Jehovah. He was accustomed thus to wait before 'the holy ones;' he believes he shall so wait in time to come.

The harvest was gathered, and the threshing-floors were busy in Judah, while David's camp was still pitched in the wood of Hareth. It was about the middle of June. But the joys of harvest did not enliven the camp, for the outlaws were living in constant fear of discovery. Every hill-top, that gave a wide view of the country below, was a watch-tower on which sentinels were placed, who might gain early tidings of approaching danger. Scouts, looking down on the plains below, or gathering tidings from frightened Hebrews, who were seeking shelter, one day brought in the news that a marauding band of Philistines had crossed the border, shut up the men of Keilah in the city, and were feeding their cattle on the threshed corn heaped on the floors outside. The spirit of the hero awoke in David. Calling for Abiathar, he put the question: 'Shall I go and smite these Philistines?' The lot was drawn, *Yes*. But his men were afraid to move. 'Here in our own Judah,' said some of the faint-hearted, 'we are living in fear: why, then, go against the array of the Philistines?' Again David asked counsel, and again the answer was clear, *Go*. Encouraged by the fearlessness of their leader, the men no longer shrank from following. And their success was complete. The robbers were driven back; their flocks were taken by the victors; and the siege of Keilah was raised. Grateful for their deliverance, the citizens invited David to take up his abode among them. Nor were he and his men unwilling to comply. Wanderers as they had been for many months, it was a pleasant change for them to enjoy once more, among

their countrymen, the plenty of home. Saul was overjoyed on hearing of David's removal with his band to the walled city of Keilah. 'God hath cast him off,' he said; 'if it were not so, he would not shut himself up in a city having gates and bars.' What a joy to Saul to be able to say, Jehovah is not with him! Orders were issued summoning all the people to assemble for war. The raid of Philistian plunderers formed a reasonable excuse for thus calling out the militia; and perhaps the real object of the expedition was known only to a few. By one stroke Saul proposed to rid himself of the dangerous outlaw. But his plans were crossed. From some one that knew, David became aware of Saul's designs. In his distress he again appealed to the Friend above, who was watching over him in all these trials. Abiathar, clothed in the sacred ephod, drew near to consult Jehovah. As the first question put was, 'Will Saul come down?' the preparations he was making cannot have been generally known. The second question was, 'Will the chiefs of Keilah betray me and my men into his hand?' In the looks and words of the head men, David read the budding of a purpose to betray their guests. Nor was he mistaken. 'Yes' was the answer given to this renewed inquiry. No resource was left to the deliverers of Keilah but to leave the place, and wander whithersoever they could. They kept to the desert, encamping on hill-tops, from which a view could be had of the surrounding country. Evidently the ingratitude of the people of Keilah had made them suspicious. At last they pitched their camp on a hill in the wilderness of Ziph, near the centre of Judah, four miles south of Hebron. The region, studded with caves and ravines, seemed favourable for hiding. Its lofty hill-tops, rising more than 2800 feet above the sea-level, also gave the fugitives a wider view of the surrounding country. But Saul allowed them no rest. For a whole year he hunted them incessantly (1 Sam. xxiii. 14).

Things came to a crisis in Ziph. During a lull in the chase after David, or while some Ziphites were planning a

betrayal, Jonathan was able to pay him a stolen visit. They met in a thick wood, which then furnished the outlaw with a covert. It was the last interview between the two friends. But Jonathan had no foreboding of the death that was in store for himself. He encouraged David to persevere in his course of right, and not to fear the hand of Saul. He never expected to be king himself, for even Saul's vow during the war of independence had entailed on him something like civil death. He hoped to be the second man in the kingdom, of which his friend should be the head. Saul himself was opposing this course of events, while he believed in it as an ordinance of God. But friendship, however close, could not deceive David into the desirableness of an arrangement such as Jonathan sketched, which must have led to disagreement in the end. The clouds which rested on the future of both of them, were such as Providence alone could lift without blighting the friendship which knit them together. David's reply to Jonathan is not recorded. Probably the answer of a loving heart, knowing what it knew, and puzzled how to respond to a friend's view of futurity, is better omitted from the history. But the two renewed the covenant of mutual kindness made about a year before. Then David remained in the wood, and Jonathan returned to his own house.

After this gleam of sunshine came the storm. Some Ziphites went up to Gibeah to offer Saul their help in catching David. Actuated by dislike of the outlaw, or by even worse motives, they described his haunts to the king, and urged him, in words which show throughout their acquaintance with the popular law-book of the country, to come down and seize his runaway servant. 'Thou shalt not deliver unto his lord the servant which is escaped from his lord unto thee,' it said (Deut. xxiii. 15). 'He shall dwell with thee, among you, where it liketh him best.' Much more applicable was this law to a servant like David, escaped from his lord the king, than to a fugitive slave. 'Our part,' they said, 'shall be to

*deliver* him into the king's hand,' the very word which gives force to the law quoted. These mean men went even further. At Saul's request they undertook to gain David's confidence, to find out all his secret haunts, and to betray everything to the king. As soon as they were ready, Saul would surprise him: 'I will search him out,' he said, 'throughout all the thousands of Judah.' They succeeded to perfection. David was deceived by their professions of friendship. When one well-planned attempt failed, they continued to be trusted by him, and even arranged a second plot for his seizure. Everything was at last ready. David and his men were then lurking in that part of the steppe called Midbar-Maon—the pastures of Maon. Their camp was pitched in the south of the district. When Saul and his soldiers approached, friends gave David warning of their coming. He thought it enough to shift his camp to a place difficult of access, though on lower ground. It was called the Rock or the Mountain; and is, perhaps, the same as the conical hill of Ma'in—a place about five or six miles south of Ziph, from which it can be seen. Lulled into security by their neighbours, they seem to have kept little watch on the surrounding waste. Their lives nearly proved the forfeit of this rashness. Guided to the spot by the Ziphites, Saul is on them before they are aware. While the outlaws are marching off at one side of the rock, the king is climbing the other, and sending detachments of troops to the right and left, with the view of cutting off their retreat. Encumbered with women, with children, and with baggage, David and his men must almost have lost hope in that hour of danger. But again Providence checked Saul in his career. When the prey, which he had hunted so often, was fairly snared in the toils, his hand was arrested. In hot haste a messenger arrives with tidings of a Philistine raid across the border. Every hour spent in hunting David is increasing the losses and sorrow of Hebrews not twenty miles away. His soldiers are at once called in, and their faces turned westward, while the hunted

outlaws move eastward across the desert. From that day forward the place was called by the outlaws, 'The Slipping-away Rock.' It was a spot they should never camp in again without thinking of their narrow escape. It was a scene which should always remind them of one of those chapters in life, which vie in strangeness with the most unlikely passages of romance.

Nor did their leader forget that narrow escape. 'The divisions or courses' became a word famous in history. It had been used three times before in the division of the Promised Land by Joshua; but the word assumed a world-wide character from that escape of David. It was used in later and more peaceful days to denote the 'courses' or 'divisions' of David's soldiers, of priests and of Levites. Thirty-five times is it found in Hebrew literature applied in that meaning—in the book of Chronicles alone. In six other places only does it occur. 'The Rock of the Divisions' or 'of the Courses' was a turning-point in David's history, burned into his memory, never forgotten in his after life.

After a journey of about twenty miles across a dreary waste, David reached Midbar-Engedi, where the ground rises in high limestone hills, scooped into caves of surprising extent. Deep glens and ravines, running down to the Dead Sea, part the hills one from another, and render the capture of outlaws almost an impossibility. Want of water and the poorness of the burnt soil impart to the country a look of cheerless gloom. Here and there throughout the waste a spring bursts forth, and rushes down to the Dead Sea on the east, or wells and cisterns are found in the desert on the west. Of these springs the best known is that of Engedi, or the 'Fountain of the Kid,' so called from the wild goats which browsed on the scanty herbage of the rocks. Rushing forth in great volume from the limestone at a height of five hundred feet above the Dead Sea, its waters, tasting strongly of lime, leap from ledge to ledge till they reach the bottom of the hill. For more

than half a mile they then flow over a bed of rich loam, that stretches between the high ground and the beach. The channel of the brook down the face of the cliff and along the plain is thickly shaded by willows, and tamarisks, and figs. In former times it watered the vine-terraces which the art of man, taking advantage of the chances offered by nature, formed on the hill-sides. The terraces still remain, memorials of a rich past, but, excepting petrified leaves, the vine and the palm have long disappeared! Farther down, the water, conveyed to all parts of the bed of loam, enabled the husbandmen of a neighbouring hamlet, known as the town of Engedi, to reap rich crops of grain and fruit. No harvests were earlier, and none more plentiful, than those gathered in the tropical climate of the Dead Sea shores. Desolation, dreariness, and poverty now reign, where the poet formerly saw 'clusters of camphire (henna) in the vineyards of Engedi' (Song i. 14).

Near this fountain David and his men sought refuge after their escape in Midbar-Maon; but the hills of the wild goats were as unsafe as the desert of Ziph. The narrative furnishes no reason for suspecting the Engedi shepherds of betraying their fellow-tribesman. But treacherous Ziphites may have again been the informers, as the pursuit was too soon renewed to allow gossip time to carry news to Gibeah. Although the king was but returned from following the Philistines, he lost no time in again hurrying after David. With his usual body-guard of three thousand chosen men he hastened southward, entering the desert at Tekoa, and following the line of wells to Engedi. As he neared the end of his journey, he came to sheepfolds among the hills, in which flocks were penned at night. It was one of David's look-out stations, on which two or three of his men kept watch for the approach of danger. A galleried cave in the neighbourhood gave them covert from the weather, and a hiding-place from enemies. When Saul's army approached, David was on the outlook himself with a

few of his men. His little band of wanderers was probably encamped in safer quarters. The watchers withdrew into their retreat till the host should pass. But great was their surprise to see the tall figure of the king darkening the mouth of the cavern. He was alone. By those in the galleries of the cave, everything he did was clearly seen against the light of the sky outside; while to him, even had he been looking for outlaws, nothing was visible on the dark background. He stooped down, not far from David. A wide and flowing garment covered his body. The men whispered to David to kill Saul, reminding him as they did so of an assurance he had received, that Jehovah would one day deliver his enemy into his hand. But the hero shrank from slaying an unarmed foe; still more so when that foe was the anointed of Jehovah. Without answering, David crept stealthily along till he came behind the king; then, unknown to Saul, he cuts off part of the loose robe, and steals back with his prize, leaving the king unharmed. None of his men had time to do what their leader thus left undone. While he was upbraiding them for their evil thoughts, Saul rose up and walked away along the road.

When the army had passed the cave, David followed them unseen, till they came to a spot where he could show himself without danger. The region in the neighbourhood of Engedi abounds in narrow ravines of great depth,—places which, from their gloomy and forbidding nature, David calls, in one of his finest poems, valleys of Death's shadow. Men can speak across them with ease, though the passage from one side to the other, even by sure-footed dalesmen, may take an hour or so of hard toil. While thus within earshot of Saul, David may have been more than an hour's march distant. Calling aloud, 'My lord, O king,' his voice, ringing through the silent air of the hills, caught Saul's ear. 'Why dost thou listen to a mean man's words, saying, David seeketh thy hurt?' he asked. 'One said to me in the cave to kill thee; but I did



not: thou art the Lord's anointed, and my father. See the proof of my forbearance;' and he held up the skirt of Saul's robe. 'As for me,' he continued, 'I am of as little worth for the king of Israel to trouble himself about as a dead dog or a single flea. The Lord will judge between me and thee.' The words of David touched a tender chord in Saul. His powers of body as well as of mind had become unstrung. He was haunted by fears, that grew fiercer on the nursing they got from his own gloomy heart and the suggestions of 'a mean man.' And no fears are more dreadful. But when he heard himself spoken to by the hunted outlaw with reproachful love, his better nature awoke to the wrong he had done, and he burst into tears. 'Is this thy voice, my son David?' he asked. 'More righteous art thou than I; thou hast repaid me good for evil. Jehovah,' he said, using the law word for *deliver* which the Ziphites previously used, 'Jehovah delivered me into thy hand, and thou killedst me not. But when a man findeth his enemy, sendeth he him well on his way as thou didst to me? Behold, I have long known that thou shalt surely be king. Swear to me, then, thou wilt not root out my name from my father's house.' Most cheerfully did the outlaw give the oath that Saul asked. Then the two parted,—Saul returning to Gibeah, David withdrawing to his stronghold among the hills. But Saul had published to the whole nation his belief in David's anointing to the throne. His words were soon known in all parts of the country.

The king and his hunted son-in-law were friends again, though the latter still lived in the wilderness as chief of an outlawed band. David even ventured abroad among his countrymen. Shortly after this healing over of the quarrel, Samuel died at a great age, and David appears to have been present at his burial in Ramah. But the peace between him and the king was soon broken. When he shifted his camp from the hill-country of Judah to the southern desert of Paran, an event happened which blew the embers of Saul's

hatred into fiercer flames than before. At that time there was dwelling in Maon a man named Nabal, who belonged to the house of Caleb, of which the headquarters were in the ancient city of Hebron, about ten miles farther north. His name is the Hebrew word for 'fool,' which might be esteemed rather a nickname given to the man by wiser neighbours, were it not that, in all countries, some fathers delight in bestowing on their children names which are outrages on common sense. He was a person of great wealth; he owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. 'His business,' it is said, or the pasture grounds of his flocks were in Carmel, two miles north of Maon, the place which David and his men used to haunt in the previous year till driven from it by Saul. Among the friends whom David made when encamped in that wilderness, were the shepherds who tended the flocks of Nabal. In the neighbourhood of his tents they never had cause to fear violence from his men or attacks from robbers. By day and by night they were safe themselves, and so were Nabal's flocks. The robbers and the wild beasts in these wastes were alike kept far away by the help of David. Owing to the misrule of Saul, and the ravages of the Philistines on the borders, the country was in an unsettled state. Many servants, as Nabal said, were then breaking away from their masters, and many robber hordes swept the wilderness pastures of flocks, which the shepherds were unable to defend. But the flocks of this churlish noble were in safe keeping under the guard of David's band.

When Nabal was shearing his sheep in Carmel in spring-time, David, expecting to be rewarded for the kindness shown in autumn, sent up ten of his young men to put him in mind of the past, and to request a share in his good fortune. Had the outlaw been a freebooter, he would have demanded as a right what he, being an honourable man, sues for as a present or a blessing. And had his ambassadors used insolent words, Nabal would have given them all that they asked. But

hearing them speak softly, requesting a favour of him in the day of his good fortune, in his foolishness he believed David was afraid to use other language. This was the man's nature: as was his name, so was he, a fool, without a spark of generous feeling. 'He was harsh and evil in his doings.' To their polite requests, to their wishes for long life and health and happiness to him and his, Nabal replied with drunken abuse: 'Who is David, and who the son of Jesse? To-day many are the servants breaking away every man from his master. And shall I take my bread and my water and my slain beasts, which I have slain for my shearers, that I may give to men whom I know not whence they are?' The servants of Nabal who had introduced the messengers, and were standing by, did not dare to remonstrate. 'Such a son of Belial!' they whispered to one another, 'there is no speaking to him.' But the messengers terrified the shepherds by the threats which they let fall at parting. The camp of David, in the plains below, was thrown into uproar on the return of the young men. The outlaws, hoping for some of the dainties that were to be got in Nabal's halls, had sent ten of their number, designing thereby gently to remind him that a whole camp looked for a share of his blessing. But they return as empty-handed as they went. Instead of David's politeness being repaid in kind, he is railed on as a runaway, and his messengers are insulted before the man's household. 'Swords on!' was the order at once issued to four hundred of the band. Two hundred remained behind in charge of the women, the children, and the baggage. David himself marched up towards Carmel at the head of the four hundred. He is bent on vengeance for the affront offered to his messengers. He is speaking of nothing but blood as atonement for the insult. Not even a child shall see the morning light in Nabal's house. But he has taken a step which might have cost him dear.

In the meantime Abigail, the wife of Nabal, a woman of

great beauty and good sense, becomes aware of the danger with which her household is threatened. One of the shepherds told her of Nabal's surly answer to David's messengers, and of the threats which fell from them when they left the house. Aware, it may be, of the quarrels between this ill-matched pair, he spoke of his master in terms that few wives would have borne, however much they may have despised their husbands at heart. Being a woman of quick parts, she sees the danger, and is forward to meet it. There is no wringing of her hands, no beating on her bosom, no hurried flight from home. Whether she was an heiress whom Nabal had married, or was too high-spirited to regard the authority of one so foolish, she acts as if his goods were hers to deal with at her pleasure. Loading six or seven asses with country riches,<sup>1</sup> and sending them on before her under the hands of servants, she followed, without letting Nabal know. Nor did he seem to regret her absence. It was drawing towards evening when she set out. The noise and bustle of feasting were already beginning. Probably Nabal was better pleased at her absence from his carousals than if she had come to grace his board.

David and Abigail met in a deep ravine not far from the house. It was one of the many rents by which the country in that neighbourhood is torn. While she was riding down one side, under the shadow of the hill, he was marching down the other at the head of his men. On meeting the

<sup>1</sup> The present consisted of the following :—

- 200 loaves of bread.
- 100 raisin cakes.
- 200 fig cakes.
- 2 skins of wine.
- 5 sheep, dressed and ready.
- 1½ bushel of parched corn.

The first three of these items were a full load of two asses (2 Sam. xvi. 1). Other four asses at least would be required for carrying the rest of the present. As ten loaves of bread and a bushel of parched corn were deemed sufficient for three men for some time (1 Sam. xvii. 17), it is clear that the present of Abigail would keep the camp of David in good cheer for several days.

armed array, she leaped from her ass, threw herself at David's feet, and besought his favour towards her household. The homage which this beautiful woman did not give her own husband, she bestows unasked on the champion of Israel. David's anger melted away before her words and her beauty. The sudden change bespeaks unusual tenderness of heart. Abigail has brought it about by steps which show her to have been a woman of ability, but not what a wife ought to have been. If she were sold to Nabal for a sum of money, as was then too often the case; or if, being an heiress, she were given away by law to a man she despised, the difference between Hebrew manners and ours speaks in her behalf. And this difference may greatly affect the view we take of conduct which seems forward and unwomanly in the young wife of Nabal. 'Upon me, me, my lord,' she said, 'be the guilt: let thine handmaid now speak in thine ears, and hear thine handmaid's case.' Abigail was requesting David to make his men stand aside, while she told her story to himself alone. When all were out of hearing, she proceeded: 'Regard not, I pray thee, my lord, this man of Belial, Nabal, for as his name, so is he: Fool is his name, and foolishness is with him.' Then she thanked Jehovah for withholding David 'from coming in blood,' and wished his enemies to be fools like Nabal. Briefly she dismisses the handsome present 'as a blessing for the young men who walk in my lord's footsteps.' Her most persuasive words are reserved for the end: 'Forgive now the sin of thy handmaid, because Jehovah will certainly make to my lord a sure house. But a mean man hath risen up to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul; but the soul of my lord shall be bound up in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God, and the soul of thine enemies it shall he sling out in the middle of the hollow of the sling.' Then she added, 'When the Lord shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, to have shed blood causeless, and to have helped thyself, shall be no stumbling-block to thee, and

heaviness of heart; but when the Lord shall deal well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.'

Words of wisdom so persuasively set forth would have touched any heart. David grants her request. He does more. 'I have accepted thee,' he adds at the end. But Abigail's words are more than proofs of her ability. They show how widespread in Israel was the belief in David's succession to the throne. All Israel knew it, as a whispered secret, which none but Saul himself dared openly to utter. She also knew, as every one in the land knew, the story of the bringing down of Goliath by a stone out of the hollow of the sling. With inimitable skill she touches it so gently but so surely, that David could not fail again to hear the women's songs, 'Saul hath smitten by thousands, but David by ten thousands.' By the words she deftly uses, Abigail asks him to think of that victory, and to do nothing which might dim its lustre. But there are dark parts in Abigail's speech. Her description of her husband is unbecoming. And her prayer to David, 'Remember thine handmaid,' leaves an unpleasant impression on a reader. It may refer to the thralldom in which law and custom had placed her to an unworthy husband. It may be nothing but a prayer for easement to a sorely tried woman, when David came to be king. But we are apt to judge it in the light of events which shortly followed. Perhaps this is unfair.

When Abigail reached the house, she found it in all the merriment of feast. Her husband was too drunk to be spoken to of the danger he had escaped: his guests and servants, copying the example set, were abandoning themselves to the royal abundance provided. But next morning, when sleep had put her husband in possession of the little sense he ever had, she laid before him, with such force as a woman of her parts easily could, the dangers of the feast, the swords of the outlaws, and his own narrow escape. His weak heart, shattered by over-drinking, became as a stone within him.

Guilt and cowardice drove him perhaps to the only friend he had, the wine-cup. Carmel, where his business was, may have been as famous in Nabal's time for its vines as it became two centuries later (2 Chron. xxvi. 10). He feared the outlaws might return. Nor was Abigail at all unlikely to put this view of the case before him. If it were so, one can readily understand how hard drinking brought the man to an untimely end. In ten days he was dead. The inspired writer says, 'Jehovah smote him and he died,' of which the meaning is that he died more suddenly than was expected by those near him, especially by the revellers who gathered round him at the sheep-shearing feast. Drunkenness would do the work, without an unexpected stroke from Providence.

When David heard of Nabal's death, the charms of Abigail's beauty and wit came back on his heart. He sent several of his young men to ask her to become his wife. Nor was the youthful widow unwilling to make amends for a married life of bitterness, by as brief a widowhood as possible. She rose from her seat on hearing the words of the young men; she bowed herself before them till her forehead touched the ground; and she called herself but a handmaiden, who would deem it an honour to wash the feet of David and his followers. Mounting her ass, and accompanied by five maidens of her household, she followed the messengers, and became David's wife. Michal had not then been given away by her father to another husband. Abigail thus usurped Michal's place. But she found, when it was too late, that her fancy had pictured in David a singleness of heart which was not there. Soon a rival was brought in to share his affections—Ahinoam, from the neighbouring village of Jezreel in Judah, the mother of David's son Amnon. A few years after, Abigail was but one of a host of wives in his palace.

These marriages brought David into trouble. They were an affectation of greatness which few but kings paraded.

But they were also a slur cast on Saul's family. The anger of the king again burst out as fiercely as ever against his son-in-law. He began with divorcing his daughter Michal from David, as he had right and reason to do. Then he gave her in marriage to one of his own tribe, Phalti of Gallim, a town not far from Gibeah (Isa. x. 30). Next, breaking the peace which had been made between them, he renewed those hunts which had nearly cost the outlaw his life already, and which gave him endless annoyance during the rest of Saul's reign. And in this David met deserved punishment. Prompted perhaps by Saul, the same Ziphites who betrayed David a year before, again undertook to make his haunts known at court. They had soon an opportunity of showing their zeal in the king's cause. Hachilah, a hill on the south of Midbar-Ziph, had long been a favourite camping ground of David's band. Having moved northward to that place after the marriage of their chief with Abigail, they were living there in peace, fearing neither treachery nor attack. But guided by the Ziphites, Saul almost surprised their camp. With his three thousand men he made a hasty march from Gibeah to Hachilah, a distance of about thirty miles. David knew nothing of their approach till, from his own stragglers and shepherd friends, he heard of troops encamped on the hill before them. Spies were at once sent out to ascertain who they were, and whether Saul were with them, with the object of seizing David. There was evidently room for doubt. Favoured by the gathering darkness, the spies were able to survey the camp and to discover the king. But Saul's guards were soon silent in sleep. Overcome by the fatigue of a thirsty march, the soldiers cast themselves on the ground for rest. Waggon, conveying provisions for the army, were drawn up in the form of a rampart, within which Saul and his chiefs slept on the bare ground. Their upper garments furnished them with all the covering needed in that hot climate. Beyond the rampart of waggons, the trench as it is



called, lay the common soldiers, scattered here and there as they found places fit for repose. Before long all were sunk in an exceedingly deep sleep.<sup>1</sup> Being encamped in a friendly country, and not aware, it may be, of the outlaw's nearness, no means were taken to guard against surprise. But they were well watched. David, with two of his men, Ahimelech the Hittite, and his own cousin Abishai, climbed to the top of a hill opposite Saul's army. By the light of the fires or by that of the moon they saw from the high ground everything in the camp. Which of you will go with me down among them? asked David of his two companions. He did not wish both of them to risk their lives. If they that go perish, one at least will be left to warn their friends to flee. Abishai volunteered: Ahimelech remained on the hill-top to carry back tidings should they be discovered.

Accustomed to all the shifts of savage life, the two soldiers crept stealthily down into the slumbering host. The heavy breathing of men, rising in measured beat on the still night air, told of the soundness of a first sleep. But who, if suddenly awakened, would not mistake the outlaws for fellow-soldiers, whom duty or bodily wants had roused from sleep? They reach the waggon rampart. Not a sound breaks the stillness of midnight but the breathing of wearied soldiers. They pass within, creeping forward till they are beside the king. They have no fear of discovery, for the deep breathing is a sure token of safety. Abishai, rejoicing at the chance, and eyeing the tall spear stuck into the ground at the king's head, whispers, as he stoops over the prostrate body of Saul, 'Let me smite him with the spear even into the earth, once only.' A second stroke from him who spoke that short speech would not have been needed. The king, who tried three times to pin his son-in-law to the wall with a spear, might now, with the same weapon, be pinned to the earth, never again to rise.

<sup>1</sup> 'A deep sleep of Jehovah,' not 'from Jehovah,' is the correct rendering, that is, in the Hebrew language, 'very deep sleep.'

But no feeling of vengeance ruffled the heart of David. 'Destroy him not,' he said, 'for who shall stretch forth his hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?' Abishai reasoned against this over-tenderness, as he deemed it. But he could not change David's purpose. 'No,' he said, 'either Jehovah shall smite him with a plague, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go down into the battle and be taken away. But take the spear which is at his head and the cruse of water, and let us go.' So safe did the two outlaws feel, and so accustomed were they to calmness when environed by danger, that they hold this conversation at the king's side. Taking with them the spear and the cruse, they crept back, as noiselessly as they entered, to the waiting-place of Ahimelech.

On reaching the top of the hill, David called aloud on Abner. The first sleep of the army was wearing off. As the call rose loud in the still air of these wastes, the army, startled by the cry, sprang to their feet. 'Answerest thou not, Abner?' were the words then heard coming from the hill-top. 'Who art thou that criest to the king?' shouted Abner, unable to make out the voices of two or three calling together. 'Art not thou a man?' exclaimed David; 'and who is like thee in Israel? Wherefore, then, keepest thou not thy watch, for one of the people came to destroy the king thy lord? Not good is this thing; assuredly worthy of death are ye, because ye kept not watch over Jehovah's anointed. Yea, where is the king's spear and the cruse of water that were at his pillow?' The spear and the cruse had been taken away; men had been in the camp who had no right to be there. Saul's heart was touched; for David alone would have let a second chance of righting his wrongs pass unimproved. And this feeling helped him to a knowledge of the voice that was speaking from the heights. Answering for himself, he asks, 'Is this thy voice, my son David?' Indignant at the slanders uttered against his loyalty, David prays in the king's hearing, that, if mean men have set him on to this bootless

chase of the guiltless, vengeance may light on their heads. They had driven him out from the Lord's own land. 'Go, serve other gods,' was what they said by their doings, if not in words.<sup>1</sup> Saul felt the justice of these reproofs. Acknowledging his sin in seeking David's life, he bids him return again to the haunts of men. And with this holding out of peace Saul parted from his son-in-law in the stillness of night, never again to meet him till they both stood before the Judge to whom the outlaw had appealed against the king's injustice.

On thinking over this new outbreak of hatred, David became afraid of a renewal of those dangers to which he nearly fell a victim before. No oath could bind the king, no proof of regard for his welfare could still the malice he bore to his son-in-law. And the men who were near the throne had succeeded in keeping this malice alive. With pardonable bitterness the outlaw always spoke of them by a word which was applied to designate grovellers, earthy like the earth from which they came. Fearing their power, he made overtures to Achish, king of Gath, for leave to enter his service. In no other way did it seem possible for him to save his life. He did not ask counsel of his Friend in heaven; 'he spoke to his own heart.' When passion or fear drives men to follow counsel of doubtful prudence, the warning or displeasure of a true friend becomes irksome. The step David proposed to take was unworthy of his past history. It was sure to lead him into danger; it might even imperil his chance of ascending the throne. But fear blinded his judgment; perhaps also the temper of his men, indisposed to risk such campaigns as

<sup>1</sup> David was quoting the popular law-book, Deut. xiii. 6, 7: 'If thy brother or thy son entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods.' The word *entice* is translated *stir up* in Samuel. Let us keep the same rendering in both passages, since the word is the same. We then have, 'If a mean man's sons have enticed thee, cursed be they, . . . they have driven me out from the Lord's inheritance, saying, Go, serve other gods' (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). The passage is full of Deuteronomy. 'The Lord's inheritance' (Deut. ix. 26), and 'serve other gods,' are common phrases in it.

they had already gone through, forced on him a policy of which he disapproved.

For five or six years this struggle had continued between Providence and the king of Israel. It was like many more struggles, of which the ripened fruit in man's experience is the proverb, Threatened men live long. But it differed from them in several of its leading features. David knew he was anointed to outlive Saul, and to take his place on the throne. Whatever dangers befell him, a way of escape was certain to be opened up, if the Prophet Samuel's word was a reality. The risk of death from his persecutor's hand was great; the sweetness of his life was soured, and he could never count on a moment of rest from pursuit by the king and his guards. He lost faith in Providence; he feared that Saul would succeed some day. Loss of faith, however pardonable it may seem, led David to a line of action which caused him bitter sorrow, many mistakes, and years of waiting for the fulfilment of his hopes. Saul, on the other hand, knew he could not take David's life. The anointing was a fact of which he was probably aware, though the circumstances may have been unknown to him. But twice he publicly declared his conviction that David was destined to succeed him on the throne. Yet his knowledge of God's arrangements for the future did not deter him from striving to thwart them. He deliberately undertook to cross the purposes of Heaven. And while he was doing this, he expected Heaven to be on his side. Knowing the purposes of Providence, he fought against them all these years. Madness was an almost inevitable result. Or, if the fighting against Providence was a symptom of his madness, the longer he maintained the struggle, the more developed would the madness become.

Achish Ben-Maoch gladly received the six hundred. In the warlike country of the Philistines they could do no harm, while, without risking the lives of his own soldiers, he might despatch the Hebrews on enterprises of difficulty or danger.

But the people of Gath could scarcely have relished an encampment of outlaws either within or without the city. They disliked them, as citizens dislike robbers; and David saw the propriety of moving his camp elsewhere. Without assigning reasons for his wish to change, he asked the king for a place in one of the cities of the Field, as the district near the southern wilderness was called. Achish gave him the town of Ziklag. The place formerly belonged to Simeon. It was then in possession of the Philistines; but by the gift of Achish it probably became henceforth part of David's private estate. Nor was it unreasonable to ask a town near the desert. The flocks and herds owned by the exiles could range over the wastes without cost or trouble. And Achish may have looked on Ziklag as a border fortress, which needed wise heads and strong arms for its safe keeping against enemies. David thus served himself by securing for his people's flocks as good pasture as could be found in the Field, in which they formerly grazed, while he also served Achish by throwing a garrison into a border town. Neither of them looked farther into the future, or had other ends in view. During a year and four months the exiles held the town for Achish.

David had not been long in Ziklag before he began to make forays against the tribes of the southern desert, people with whom Judah was never at peace. The rovers of the wilderness were feared by the nations near them as thieves and cattle-lifters. Sometimes in large bands, at other times in whole encampments, they stole from their fastnesses, and threw themselves on the fields of Judah or Philistia. Corn was trampled down, flocks and herds driven off, and the people were either murdered or swept away into slavery. An efficient police force on the border of the desert alone prevented these raids. Between Israel and the rovers had grown up a feud which nothing could appease. Every man in David's band had thus a quarrel with them; from private

reasons, perhaps, certainly from national. It had been handed down from father to son with a strength of hatred unknown to nations that enjoy the blessings of good government. When looked at from our western point of view, these blood quarrels seem a scandal to the people by whom they were cherished. But this is judging others by our ways, and is setting up our own blessings as a standard for all time. Narrow-mindedness was shown in these feuds, a want of right principle also, and a disregard of the divine command that the son shall not bear the punishment of the father's crime. But we ourselves may show as much narrow-mindedness in passing severe judgment on times and ways altogether unlike our own.

Standing forth as the champion of his own people, even in the land of their enemies, David found employment for his followers in avenging this ancient feud. By doing so he hoped to earn the thanks of his countrymen, and enrich his own band. Nor were these rovers friends of Achish, for the fields of Philistia offered them a more tempting prey than the hills of Judah. They dwelt in the sandy wastes that stretch from the south of Judah to the Isthmus of Suez and the banks of the Nile. Their camping grounds, the seasons at which they shifted their abodes, the lines of road across the wastes, and the springs of water, were known to many in David's band. It was therefore an easy matter for the six hundred, leaving their wives and children safe in Ziklag, to venture into the desert, to watch their chance, and to smite an encampment when no enemy was believed to be near. On these forays the rule was to bring neither man nor woman away alive; no one was left to tell the tale. The story of the ruin that befell an unsuspecting camp was thus kept from reaching the ears of Achish. If any rovers escaped into the desert, their fate would be worse than that of their kindred who perished by the sword, unless they reached the distant camp of a friendly tribe. Sheep, oxen, asses, camels, clothing,

were part of the spoil taken. Nor did David conceal these raids from Achish. After his return to Ziklag with the plunder of a desert camp, he repaired to Gath, and boasted of his success in ravaging the fields of his countrymen and their friends. Achish believed him, especially when a large share of the spoil fell to him and his captains. 'Have ye not made a road to-day?' was the usual question put when David presented himself at court. 'Yes,' was the exile's answer, varied according to his humour, 'against the south of Judah, or of the Jerahmeelites, or of the Kenites.' Achish, as simple as he was four years previously, when he thought David's acting true madness, prided himself on the thorn he had found for pricking the side of Israel. 'He is thoroughly abhorred of his own people,' he said to his courtiers; 'he shall be my servant for ever.' The filling of their hands with gold and of their folds with flocks helped very much to make the wisest among them see as their master saw, and feel as he felt. For more than a year David was able to play this deceitful game, but not without punishment.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DEATH OF SAUL.

(1 SAM. xxviii. 1-2 SAM. ii. 4 ; 1 CHRON. x. 1-xii. 22.)

THE quarrel between Saul and Samuel, the slaughter of the priests of Nob, and the flight of David to the Philistines' country, betoken a kingdom divided against itself. Foreign invasion was almost certain to follow. In truth, little more than a year elapsed between the flight of David and the death of Saul in a disastrous battle on Mount Gilboa. Although the guilt of the nation's ruin ought not to be laid on David, he cannot be wholly excused. A champion of the Hebrews, so distinguished as he was ; a son-in-law, too, of their king, could not transfer his own services and those of his trained followers to a hostile race without fostering, in its leading men, the hope of speedily overcoming a weakened foe. Safety for himself and his followers cannot be pleaded in excuse for David's conduct. He had forsaken his country : his country, as it was bound to do, repaid his unworthiness by forsaking him. Seven years of humiliation were required to prove that he was still a Hebrew and a patriot. Both the anointed king and the high priest of Israel had sought refuge in the Philistines' country.

Considering the time favourable for recovering their lost dominion, the Philistine lords prepared to seize the centre of the Hebrews' land with a powerful force. As soon as this resolution was taken, Achish summoned David from Ziklag to Gath. 'Know assuredly,' he said, 'that with me thou shalt go in the host, thou and thy men.' It must have been



unwelcome tidings to the Hebrew prince. But, putting the best face he could on the affair, he replied, with singularly cautious courtesy, 'Therefore thou shalt know what thy servant shall do.' Achish understood the words in a different sense from what was perhaps intended. He believed David to be a renegade Hebrew. He knew also that renegades are desperate men, who expect no mercy from those they have forsaken, and who only prove their truth to those they have joined, by deeds from which other men shrink. But Achish did not consider David to be, as he was, a pretended renegade, walking on a knife edge, carrying his life in his hand almost every hour. 'Therefore,' said the befooled Philistine, 'keeper of mine head will I make thee all the time of the war.' Falsehood had brought things to a crisis with David. By pretending treason to his own people, he was lifted to honour among its enemies. To have fled from Ziklag to Judah would have been his safest course; to have offered his sword and those of his followers to Saul would have been honourable. To have plainly told Achish, I cannot fight against mine own people, would have been the most honest course of all. But he had tied his hands by the pretended raids on Judah. He preferred to dissemble, or to wait on events, in the hope of finding a loophole of escape. To his disgrace he joined the soldiers of Achish when they marched to invade the land of the Hebrews.

The Philistines advanced along the level ground between the hills of Ephraim and the Mediterranean sea-shore, till they reached the great opening which gave them admission to the plain of Jezreel. The road was the same along which Egyptian armies had marched centuries before, and which caravans took in their trading journeys from Damascus to the Nile (Gen. xxxvii. 25). Rising by a gradual ascent through a broad valley from the Mediterranean plain, it fell as gently into the rich fields of Jezreel. Mounted archers and a chariot force secured freedom of way for the invaders. No

rocky passes lay on the route, such as those at Beth-horon and Aijalon, which proved fatal to their fathers in the beginning of Saul's reign. Nor do these passes, leading to the highlands of Benjamin, appear to have been in their keeping at this time as they were then. A cautious advance, through a country dangerous for Hebrew foot-soldiers against a strong cavalry force, implies far less confidence in the invaders at the end of Saul's reign than they showed at the beginning of it and in the middle. But their march was unopposed. They traversed the plain of Jezreel from west to east till they pitched their camp at Shunem, a town in the tribe of Issachar, with the heights of Gilboa on their right hand and Little Hermon on their left. Their progress was watched by Saul with his infantry. By short marches along the hills he kept abreast of the enemy in the plain below. But at last the two armies came within striking distance of each other, though there seems to have been no reason for Saul seeking a battle. Had he held aloof, the tide of invasion might have spent its force in wasting the rich lands of Jezreel, and then withdrawing behind its own borders. But in those days two thunder-clouds of war seldom came into the same neighbourhood without collision and a torrent of bloodshed.

From the high ground of Gilboa, Saul looked down on the enemies' array, several hundred feet below. Its imposing appearance filled him with fear; 'his heart greatly trembled.' Although he was close to the scene of Gideon's great exploit, when the three hundred vanquished a hundred thousand invaders, he felt the sinking of heart which precedes defeat. Perhaps he was camped near the same fountain Harod (Terror), at which they were chosen for the fight. But to him it was a place of terror, not of hope. Gideon felt that the Lord was with him; Saul said the Lord was departed from him. This difference of belief explains the difference felt by the two Hebrew leaders between certainty of victory and fear of defeat. A small body of men followed Gideon; a large

army—All-Israel—followed Saul; but the strength of the Hebrews did not lie in numbers. The dream of a soldier in the enemy's camp, overheard by Gideon, gave encouragement for the attack; but no dream came to hearten Saul or any of his advisers. Night after night passed without a revelation of the future. Prophets and sons of the prophets thronged the schools of learning in the land, or attended the patriot army in its march along the hills. But no message of warning or of guidance came from any of them. Every tongue was silent, though the king seems to have sought far and near for help. One resource remained. The high priest, Abiathar, was in David's company in the Philistine camp. But Saul had the ark in his keeping. Undoubtedly also he had chosen a successor to the high priest Ahimelech, whom he had slain. Although history is silent on the subject, the king was far too superstitious to remain without a priest as chief representative of the nation's faith. Whoever that priest may have been,—whether Jehoiada or the father of Zadok,—the lost king turned to him in his distress. He had the high priest's ephod, with Urim and Thummim, and the ark of God. But neither light nor guidance appeared from that source. All was dark save one thing. Truth was told to the king even by the hands of the priest whom he had himself appointed. Every time the light and truth of the sacred breastplate were appealed to, no light broke the darkness; but the truth was plain. No answer of *yes* or *no* was returned to the king's anxious questionings. All was dark. But as often as the attempt was made to obtain an answer, the blank stone, or whatever else stood for it, came out in the priest's hand. It meant God's silence: He refused to answer. To Saul it was clear that he was forsaken of Heaven; his advisers had the same feeling. Once before the king experienced a similar sense of forsaking. A great triumph had been gained over the Philistines. A greater seemed certain; but before the blow was struck, the high priest vainly asked

guidance from the Urim of the breastplate pocket. The king turned in great alarm from the enemy, and was driven to condemn to death Jonathan, the best of his sons. The same shadow had again crossed Saul's path: silence in presence of the same Philistine enemy brought back to him that dreadful past, and suggested a more dismal future. 'The Lord answered him not, neither by dreams nor by the Urim, nor by the prophets.' The singular omission of Thummim, which follows Urim in other passages, shows the accuracy of the story. While Urim means light, Thummim means truth. The former was refused; the latter was given. 'God is departed from me' was the truth which Saul had learned; but it brought no light to his troubled heart.

Overcome with terror, haunted by the evil conscience of many a wicked deed, this sorely beset king resolves to gain by unhallowed means an insight into the purposes of Heaven, which he was not allowed to secure by its usual agents. What he once abhorred, he now had recourse to—the forbidden art of witchcraft. Some of his retinue appear to have been beforehand with him in the attempt thus to discover the future. Perhaps, also, they suggested to their unhappy master the means, which they themselves believed might be effectual for the purpose. A heathen like Doeg, or Saul's Amalekite slayer, though a proselyte to the Hebrew faith, would retain enough of the old nature in him to find it asserting its power when life reached one of its turning-points. But if they suggested, the king only could give the order: 'Seek ye for me a woman, mistress of a spirit, that I may inquire by her.' The servants were ready with the answer: 'Behold a woman, mistress of a spirit, in Endor.'<sup>1</sup> When night fell on the hostile armies, Saul, accompanied by

<sup>1</sup> This story of the witch has given rise to endless controversy. 'The fathers, reformers, and earlier Christian theologians, with very few exceptions, assumed that there was not a real appearance of Samuel, but only an imaginary one.' 'Saul does not appear to have seen the apparition himself.' These are the

two of his officers, ventured on the journey to Endor. He had spent the hours of daylight in the feverish anxiety which a mind, already partly unhinged, could not but feel on taking a step which all its previous actions condemned. And he had weakened himself still more by a whole day's fast, apparently a common way with Saul of displaying his religious zeal. Endor lay high on the hill slopes, about ten miles across the valley from Gilboa. Philistine soldiers swarmed in the low grounds, and rendered the passage from the south side to the north unsafe. A toilsome night journey of several miles round the eastern edge of their camp had thus to be undertaken by the excited and weakened king. Most of it was also by difficult hill paths along rugged ground. He was not less than sixty years of age, perhaps he was nearer seventy. Even, then, though he rode to Endor and back, his constitution must have been originally of iron to have stood the strains imposed on it by the anxiety and fasting of the day, followed by the terrors of the night.

It was thought advisable for Saul to disguise himself. He and his two companions might fall into the enemy's hands as they crossed the valley. By passing themselves off for country people fleeing before the storm of war, they might hope more readily to escape injury. A different reason may have led the king 'to put on other raiment'—a desire to conceal his rank from the 'mistress of the spirit.' It was an inconsistent act; but superstition is seldom logical in its conclusions. He expected to discover the future by means of a woman from whom he hoped to conceal the present, easily ascertainable though it was. This attempt at concealment shows the king to have been in some degree known to the woman, as his attendants had probably become aware. And if they arranged this meeting between their master and the

words of Keil and Delitzsch, who believe Samuel really appeared. But they and other writers have overlooked many things which require to be considered in forming a judgment on this subject.

witch, they must have given her reason to expect a visit from a man of consequence. At least everything passes off as if all the steps had been carefully arranged beforehand. The journey across the valley was made in safety. The road to the village was not missed in the darkness, as it easily might have been; and the discovery of the woman's abode, even 'by night,' shows an acquaintance with the place on the part of Saul's attendants, which indicates a previous visit, if not preparedness in the woman to receive her visitors. Probably the witch's first sight of the tall stranger disclosed to her his rank, if she entertained any doubt of it before. He speaks for himself; his words are words of command; he treats his companions as of no account. A man, who had for many years spoken as a king in council and in battle, was less able in this hour of weakness to put on another mind than to put on other clothes. His rank shines through his words in the woman's hut. Even though she had never seen him before, she is too sharp not to recognise his great stature,—a head taller than the rest of the people,—to discern the ring of command in his voice, and to see for herself that the king was come to ask her help that night. The scourge of her race is now in her power. The man who had burned and slain her kindred, and had made life a constant danger to herself, is a suppliant at her feet. She knows the story of his madness, his suspicions of David, his dethronement by Samuel, his forsaking by God. People like her made it their business to wring from terrified dupes secrets which the world at large might not be familiar with, and might never come to know. And the wheel of fortune had at last brought to her feet the king, with whom she and her race were at deadly feud: 'Divine now for me by the spirit; and bring thou up for me whom I shall name to thee.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for *divine* is unknown in the Pentateuch except in the witch-law (Deut. xviii. 10-14). It occurs twice in Samuel. *Divination* occurs in Num. xxii. 7, xxiii. 23; Deut. xviii. 10. Ex. xxii. 18 cannot have been the

These words of the king reveal his acquaintance with the language of necromancy—its inconsistencies and its delusions. While regarding the woman as ‘the mistress of a spirit,’ Saul believed her or her spirit able to ‘bring up’ from the abodes of the dead any one whom he wished to consult. The woman is a medium between the living and the dead. So Saul regards her. Evidently he expects the departed, whom she or her spirit shall bring up at his wish, to speak to himself directly, and to be spoken to in return by him. But this is not the witch’s view; though, with the cunning of her race, she waits the march of events, and holds her hand till circumstances shape her course. She parries his demand. ‘Behold,’ she says with well-affected surprise, ‘thou knowest what Saul hath done, that he hath cut off the spirits and the wizards out of the land: wherefore, then, layest thou a snare for my life to cause me to die?’ Every word she spoke must have made the king wince under her eye. She mentions his name, instead of calling him the king or our lord the king: ‘Saul hath done.’ She reminds him of his zeal in rooting out her kindred from the land; and she reproaches him with the meanness of seeking to entrap a lone woman into a deed which might cause her death. By her skilful words he is drawn on to speak still more clearly, and as the king only could. Saul swears to her: ‘As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.’ Both witch and king recognised Jehovah as far higher than any of the spirits who could be made to speak. An oath in His name was thus intended to shield from punishment the doer of deeds which His law condemned. Inconsistency and delusion run through the whole of this sorrowful business. ‘Whom shall I bring up for thee?’ said the woman, now feel-

law followed by Saul, though Colenso (vii. 140) cites it as his authority. Again, ‘to lay a snare’—a word used by the witch (1 Sam. xxviii. 9)—occurs five times in all, once in Deuteronomy, once in Samuel, and three times in the Psalms. Saul and the historian were familiar with Deuteronomy.

ing sure of her game. 'Bring up Samuel for me,' said the king. Shortly before the beginning of his reign, he appears to have been ignorant of the great prophet's name. At the end of it, not two years after the prophet's death, he expects this wretched woman in the lonely village of Endor to know where Samuel was in the abodes of the dead, and to bring him back to the realms of the living.

The tricks and charms which preceded the great event of Samuel's appearance are supposed by some to have been managed, not in the woman's hut, but in one of the numerous caves near Endor,<sup>1</sup> and in presence of Saul only. However, neither did the strangers require to leave her house, nor were the two followers shut out, while the divining was going on. It is quite as easy to terrify three dupes as to terrify one; indeed, it is sometimes easier, especially when the alarm of each of them is heightened by the words and looks of the others. Perhaps a few silly tricks were at first paraded to cheat the visitors into the belief of something great coming, before she began the business which lay nearest Saul's heart. The names by which women of her mode of life went in those days were 'bottles' and 'knowers,' words which are rendered in our version, 'having familiar spirits' and 'soothsayers.' They may have been called 'bottles' from a custom they had of making their god seem to speak out of a skin bottle, or from the stoutness of their bodies, by which they looked like bottles swelled with wine. Their art lay in practising what is known as ventriloquism.<sup>2</sup> By first speaking with the natural voice, and then suddenly changing its tone, they made it appear as if they were talking with a spirit underground. By such tricks this witch-woman cheated her dupes. Reading in their faces what they wished or what they feared, or working out of them by leading questions their hopes and sorrows, she gave them back as if from a spirit, but in reality by her own

<sup>1</sup> See *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 459.

<sup>2</sup> See the Greek translation of 1 Chron. x. 13. Comp. Isa. xxix. 4.



changed voice, what she had taken from their faces or their words. She first read their hearts by their looks ; then with a false voice, which they mistook for an unseen being's, she gave them the results of that reading. Having thus thrown a spell around her dupes, she got them to believe that, leagued with higher powers, she knew more of the future than they did. The witch of Endor was no wiser than Saul and his two men. She knew no more about their fate or the coming overthrow of the Hebrews than they did ; and she had no means of knowing. But she was able to guess what would soon happen. She saw the shadow of disaster resting on the Hebrew camp ; she believed the disaster could not be long in coming. Saul and his brave sons, looking on defeat as ruinous to their country, would dare everything to maintain its honour ; if worsted, they would likely fall in battle. These probabilities were fairly within her reach. Like all the gipsy tribe, to which she belonged, her skill had often been spent in hitting on facts by choosing the likeliest of probabilities. And on this occasion, the crowning triumph of her life, she contrived to weave them into a web which turned out, in most of its threads at least, to be something better than gossamer.

Looking earnestly forward, and making her visitors believe that she saw somewhat, she cried out, seemingly in the utmost distress, 'Why hast thou deceived me ? for thou art Saul.' She saw nothing to make her thus afraid. Her discovery of the king was a pretence, as well as her terror lest he was laying a snare for her life. She had delayed till then coming out with what she knew long before. It suited her purpose to astonish the king, to throw him into confusion, and to secure a breathing space before making her next move. Saul, seeing nothing himself, but devoutly believing she saw something concealed from his eyes, reassures her : 'Be not afraid ; for what sawest thou ?' 'Gods,' she said, 'I saw ascending out of the earth,' — a form of words without meaning that night, and without

bearing on the words which follow. In reading the faces of her dupes, the woman, like most others of her class, was quick-witted and ready. In venturing into the region of the unknown, she turns out to be a common cheat. But the king, thinking always of Samuel, puts a meaning on her words to suit himself. 'What form is he of?' he asked, though she had said nothing to make him put that question, or that could lead him to imagine she was speaking of only one being. Reminded of her visitor by these words, she answered, 'An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle.' And then Saul, believing his wishes fulfilled, but seeing nothing all the while, is certain it is Samuel, and casts himself on the ground before the imagined prophet. 'An old man wrapped in a mantle' was a description which held good of ten thousand old men as well as Samuel. Had the witch been dealing with men of sound reason, she could not have carried the cheat much further. But so shattered is the mind of the king, that, giving himself wholly up to the woman, he sees with her eyes and hears with her ears, instead of using his own. Saul saw nobody but the witch, and the sacred writer has recorded only what the witch said she saw or heard.

It is now the woman's turn to avenge, on the persecutor of her race, the wrongs done to herself and to her kindred. With un pitying stroke does her sword cut every chord in the bosom of the king. Unseen by him as he lay prostrate on the ground, or by his cowering followers, she has now ample room for playing off her tricks. Slowly, and in the low wailing tone which was thought best suited to the spirits of the dead, the woman, casting her voice towards the imaginary spirit, begins, 'Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?' Samuel is speaking to Saul! The bewildered king replies by the story of his distress: 'God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams; therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make

known unto me what I shall do.' Then the full storm of the witch's malignity bursts on Saul, bearing all the more heavily on him from its likeness to the truth. 'Wherefore, then, dost thou ask of me,' said the Voice, 'seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him [for himself] as He spake by me; for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me;<sup>1</sup> yes, the Lord shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.' The woman has emptied her quiver into Saul's heart. In the compass of a few words she sums up a roll of griefs that strikes him with terror. Wearied with his toilsome journey, and overcome by a lengthened fast, his body cannot bear up under these tortures of the mind. Surely a groan of anguish came from him when the woman said, 'To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me;' for, as if to give it more piercing power, she repeated what she said before, 'Yes, the Lord shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.' As these words leave her lips, Saul swoons away on the floor of the hut. And the scene ends.

The words of the Voice were well fitted to fill the king with terror. They brought back to his mind that day of anguish, when the clouds began to gather thickly on his reason, his hopes, and his house. He had heard part of them before from the lips of Samuel himself in Gilgal. When the prophet was then tearing himself away in anger after the mismanaged expedition against Amalek, the king took hold of his mantle to detain him, and in the struggle rent off the

<sup>1</sup> The Greek translators were shocked at this sentiment; they altered it into, 'Thou and thy sons with thee shall fall.'

skirt: 'Jehovah,' exclaimed the angry seer, 'hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou,' almost the very words which were uttered in the witch's hut. She knew what Abigail knew, what all Israel had long known, the rending of the kingdom from Saul, and the giving of it to David. Rather we should say that she had access to a more accurate knowledge of what took place at that interview than most of the Hebrews. From Saul's peculiar temperament, it may be doubted if he could conceal from his servants the threats of Samuel, and the fears they had caused him. Two of these servants were then with him. If one or both of them had visited the witch before, on what would the conversation more naturally turn than on the hopes and fears of the king, representing as these did the hopes and fears of the whole army? What would the servants be more likely to repeat than the terrible words which Saul could not keep to himself? But by whatever means she got this knowledge, she could not have planted a more stinging arrow in Saul's heart. Her vengeance was taken without stint or mercy.

This reference to the interview between Samuel and Saul raises suspicions of the woman's honesty. Of the rending of Samuel's garment, and of the rending of the kingdom from Saul, All-Israel soon knew, for the thing was not done, nor the words spoken, out of sight or earshot of others. But at that interview the seer had also said, 'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.' Saul was guilty of the former in not obeying the voice of Jehovah; in seeking the help of a witch, he was guilty of the latter. The pretended Samuel, while inveighing against the king for rebellion, says not one word about witchcraft, though he quotes from the memorable conversation in which these two were joined together as equally hateful to Jehovah. If Samuel was really in the hut, this passing by of the sin of witchcraft is an inexplicable feature in the story. If the woman was speaking in the prophet's name, it is only

what she would have done. Manifestly, the seer had no hand in what was passing in the witch's hut. It may seem strange that the woman knew of the battle on the morrow, and of the doom of Saul and his sons. But the word rendered 'to-morrow' has a wider and less definite meaning in the Hebrew than in the English. Besides, the historian does not say that the battle was then fought. Many good men who have studied this subject regard the witch's fears and the appearance of Samuel as realities. In answer to, or on the back of her incantations, Samuel returned to this world to upbraid his fallen favourite, and to terrify this wretched woman. But it jars on our feelings of right and wrong to imagine the arts of a witch, silly as they must appear to us, answered, or seeming to be answered, by an appearance in bodily form of the sainted dead, disturbed from its peaceful rest. Or is it possible that the awakened sleeper should complain as the Voice complained, and should even use the word common in the tricks of necromancers, 'Why hast thou disquieted me, *to bring me up?*' Or is it to be thought that Samuel, who mourned over Saul's rejection from being king, should, in the darkest hour of that prince's life, twit him with the name of David, and utter useless taunts, while he passed by the sin of consulting a witch, which pious Hebrews shrank from as rebellion against Jehovah? The story reads like a clever piece of vengeful trickery by the witch. There is nothing in it which bears the stamp of a message from heaven. And it would be indeed singular if God, after refusing to answer the rebel king by Urim and Thummim in His own appointed way, or by visions, or by dreams, should even seem to employ the unholy service of an artful woman.

Alarmed at her success in frightening the king, the witch ran up to him where he lay stretched on the floor. Reading in his haggard looks want of food as much as terror, she entreated him to partake of a morsel of bread. But the king refused. Perhaps he wished in that hour of darkness to find

a riddance from his load of sorrow in speedy death. But it is more agreeable to his character to imagine that Saul had been fasting as a means of gaining the favour of Jehovah, and that he was bent on keeping that fast for a longer time. With a stubbornness that was deeply rooted in his nature, he refused to eat in answer to all the woman's entreaties. His two followers, standing aloof at first, and looking on the witch as a superior being, whose word should have far more weight than theirs, joined in entreating him to partake of food. Perhaps they were not less faint than he; at least they had no chance of a meal unless he should consent. With much difficulty the three prevailed. Saul rose from the ground and lay down on a bed, while the woman got ready food for her guests. A calf was sacrificed, that is, killed, broth was prepared, and cakes were baked. After partaking of these the king and his men set out for the camp, which they reached before daybreak.

It is natural to ask how a story so extraordinary found its way into the sacred record. If we look on it as a mere piece of history, the details must have been got either from Saul or from the servants, for they did not come from the woman. The two men were thoroughly deceived. They would speak of the appearance of Samuel as a fact; they all heard a conversation between the Voice and Saul; and if they whispered the night's adventure to their friends, it would be with the air and colouring of a real visit from the world of spirits. The story, as told in the book of Samuel, is undoubtedly such a story as the king and his servants would relate. It has a weird, unearthly air about it, as if bearing the stamp of their terror, and coined in the gloom of the witch's hut. But a story, coming direct from one of the principal actors, is precisely what the sacred writer would have inserted in his history without note or comment of his own. Having satisfied himself of the accuracy of the facts (Luke i. 3), he gives them as matters of history, making no remark on them, and allowing

his readers to draw conclusions from principles recorded in more ancient writings. The books of Samuel are written on the plan of recording facts; and the adventure of Saul in the witch's hovel is a case in point. The historian has related all that happened, or was thought to have happened; he has committed himself to no judgment for or against the witch's power; he has only laid bare the sin of Saul in believing that a mortal could awake the dead in defiance of Heaven, and draw aside the veil which conceals the future.

The hostile armies were only a few miles apart. The plain of Jezreel, which the Philistines entered from the southwest, is bounded on the east by two ranges of hills, Gilboa and Little Hermon, between which lies a valley, narrowing near the town of Jezreel to a mile in breadth, and sloping down a wide plain to the Jordan. Several springs, rising on the flanks of these ranges, flow eastward into that river. The largest of them, known as the Fountain of Jezreel, bubbles forth with much noise and a great rush of water at the foot of Gilboa, near the narrow neck of the valley. About four miles due north of this fountain was the town of Shunem, not far from the roots of Little Hermon. The Hebrew army, resting on the hill-sides, which rise high above the Fountain of Jezreel, could betake themselves to the loftier heights of Gilboa in their rear if they were unable to withstand the invaders. But they were so placed that the Philistines could not enter the broader valley, leading down to Bethshan and the Jordan, without fighting at a disadvantage. And it may have been the plan of the invasion to march down this pass to the ford, to cross the river, and to waste the fertile fields of Gilead. By this means the most favoured regions of Israel would have been trampled down. Saul was watching the mouth of the pass with the Hebrew army. If the enemy attempted to enter, a battle could not be avoided.

Before engaging with the Hebrews, the leaders of the Philistines held a review of their forces at the town of Aphek,

in the plain of Jezreel. During the march past, the prince under whose banners those who were passing happened to be ranged, left his place among the chiefs and marched in the rear with his bodyguard. But the guardsmen of Achish were David's six hundred exiles. Abiathar, the high priest of Jehovah, was with them. A high priest of the true faith was marching to battle in the ranks of the heathen against his own countrymen! As these exiles approached the chiefs, their equipment and their cast of countenance caught the eye. Murmurs arose at Hebrews being allowed to join the army. Renegades from Israel had filled up the Philistine ranks before this time. But the Philistines had cause to repent their rashness in trusting traitors. As soon as disaster threatened the Philistine arms, the renegades passed over in a body to their countrymen. To the treachery of their Hebrew allies was partly due one of the most overwhelming defeats ever inflicted on the Philistines. Although ten or fifteen years had elapsed since then, many captains in the invading army were old enough to remember that day of shame, and with influence sufficient to prevent a like result from the same cause. With good reason the assembled chiefs murmured at the want of judgment displayed by Achish. 'What,' they say, 'do these Hebrews here?' Surprised, as it were, at their ignorance of the brave band he had taken into his pay, Achish replies, 'Is not this David which hath been with me this year or two, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me?' But the princes were not so easily cheated as Achish. 'Wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew by his thousands, and David by his ten thousands?' They had reason to be alarmed. In David's men they saw a band of disciplined troops, trained to obey one will, to act together in battle, and who had already reaped a dowry of death from 'the heads of these men' of the Philistines. And the



danger of a band like his deserting, or falling on their unguarded rear at the crisis of battle, was too great a risk to be run. A panic might seize the rude levies of which their army was mostly made up; and with ordinary vigour on the part of Saul to second his servants' onset, this well-planned inroad would end in disaster. These fears of the princes resulted in orders for the Hebrews to return to Ziklag. Summoning David to his tent that night, Achish said to him, 'Surely as Jehovah liveth,'—a form of oath taught him perhaps by David,—'thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight; nevertheless, the lords favour thee not. Wherefore now go in peace.' Glad though David was at this unlooked-for deliverance, he put on the air of an injured man who was kept back without cause from fighting for his 'lord the king.' Fairly understood, these words, 'my lord the king,' mean Achish; but in his heart David may have meant Saul, king of Israel. Deceived by his forwardness, the Philistine gave fresh assurances of the value he set on David's services: 'I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God.' Then bidding him depart as soon as it was morning, Achish dismissed the Hebrew captain, to see him no more, perhaps, till at the head of All-Israel he defeated the Philistines before the very city where Achish held his court, and where he had received the outlaw in peace.

About a week or ten days after David marched southward the battle was fought. The Philistines, emboldened by the want of spirit in their opponents, climbed the heights and speedily scattered the Hebrews. Following the beaten army along the ridge of Gilboa, the invaders strewed the path with dead and wounded. Among those who fled was Saul. His three brave sons, Jonathan, Melchishua, and Abinadab, fell in battle, or in attempting to conduct their father safely from the field. No one was left with the king but his armour-bearer. Wounded by the mounted archers who, recognising

him by the crown which he wore, were pressing hard on him, the king besought the armour-bearer to draw his sword and run him through. But the young man was terrified at the request. A refusal did not change the king's mind. Leaning on his spear, he reflected for a little on the rash step despair was driving him to take. At last, wearied of a life that had become a burden, he snatched the sword from the armour-bearer. His own appears to have been lost in the battle. Planting the hilt in the ground, he fell on the point. The young man drew it out of his master's body. He could do nothing to save him. But though the king may have given himself a death-wound, he lived for some time after. To the armour-bearer it seemed a point of honour to follow where Saul had shown the way. Planting the sword again in the ground he also fell on the point, and died beside his master. A young Amalekite saw all that took place. Approaching the bodies, he found Saul still living, able, indeed, at the sound of footsteps, to raise himself partly from the ground. The terror of falling alive into the Philistines' hands had strengthened the dying man for this last effort. But he saw that it was a young Amalekite, a Hebrew slave, who was standing near him. He besought the youth to finish the half-done work. The destroyer of the young man's kindred entreated him to destroy in turn. Knowing that Saul could not survive the deadly hurt he had given himself, the Amalekite plucked the sword out of the bosom of the armour-bearer and plunged it through the heart of Saul. He then stripped the dead body of its kingly ornaments, the crown and the bracelet; he hid them in his dress, and hurried southward with his prize.<sup>1</sup>

When the dwellers in the fertile valleys near the battlefield

<sup>1</sup> By combining two independent accounts of one and the same event, we thus obtain a clear view of all the circumstances. The theory of two documents, two authors, two traditions, with other modern shifts, does not require to be examined.

saw the day turning against their countrymen, they left their homes and fled across the Jordan. Others, living at a greater distance from the field, also abandoned their cities. Among these were many of the villagers on the western bank of the Jordan, and the people of several towns in the tribe of Benjamin. Gibeah, Saul's own city, was thrown into terror. The royal family fled for their lives. In the flight the nurse let fall Meri-baal, or Mephibosheth,<sup>1</sup> the son of Jonathan, then a child of five years of age. As they had no time to attend to the hurt the boy had received, he was lamed for life in body, and perhaps also in mind. Many of the places which their inhabitants thus abandoned were seized by the Philistines. The fortress of Bethshan, situated at the east end of the plain of Jezreel, on a height which slopes down to the Jordan, was one of these towns.

The battle of Gilboa lasted till near sundown. On the following morning the Philistines, when stripping the slain, found the bodies of Saul and his three sons. Messengers were immediately despatched with the heads and armour of these princes to publish in Philistia the tidings of victory. The head of Saul was fixed in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod; his armour was hung up in that of Ashtaroth. The four bodies were then nailed in derision to the wall of Bethshan, under the guard of a Philistine garrison. This outrage on the national honour shamed into action some of the brave men who still survived among the Hebrews. Within sight of the ground on which Saul gained the great battle over Nahash, and on the wall of one of his own cities, the headless remains were exposed. And the bodies of these princes might hang there after the flesh had rotted off their bones, while, by the law of Israel, the body of the most wicked wrong-doer could not be exposed beyond sundown. No sooner were tidings of this outrage carried across the Jordan than the men of Jabesh-

<sup>1</sup> The two words have practically the same meaning, 'Contender against Baal' and 'Exterminator of an idol.'

Gilead, in grateful remembrance of the obligations under which Saul had laid their fathers, resolved to carry off the bodies. The country on the west of the river was swarming with enemies. It was early spring, the time of barley harvest, and the river, swelled by the melting of the snows on Lebanon, had overflowed its banks. But these Gadites of Jabesh were men 'whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.'<sup>1</sup> Travelling all night, they reached Bethshan before daybreak, took down the headless bodies, and set out on their return. But their march lay through an enemy's country, though it was in their own land. When morning broke, they had to fight their way. Success attended them, for they drove off the inhabitants of the valleys, or, it may be, the Anakim, both east and west. On reaching Jabesh they burned the bodies to prevent the Philistines repeating the outrage, and then, gathering the ashes, buried them under an oak near the town.

While David was on his way to Ziklag from the Philistine camp at Aphek, several men of rank belonging to the tribe of Manasseh joined his band. The names of seven of them are given (1 Chron. xii. 19-21). It tells a tale of misrule when men, able to bear arms and esteemed brave soldiers, abandon their king, turn their back on his field of battle, and march off with one who came to take sides against him. Bidding them welcome to fight under his banners, David gave them a place among his captains. In two days the exiles had nearly traversed the country between Aphek and Ziklag. On the third day they reached home. But the town was silent as the grave. Not a living thing was found in it. Every house was burned to the ground. Wives, sons, and daughters; slaves, flocks, and herds; gold, silver, garments,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xii. 8-15. The deeds of the Gadites mentioned in this passage may with all probability be referred to this time. The 'hold in the wilderness' was Ziklag (1 Chron. xii. 1, 8), and 'the first month' was the season of barley harvest.

the gathered wealth of six years of hardship, were carried off at one swoop. A bitter cry of grief from the six hundred showed how deeply their hearts were stirred. At first they laid the blame on David, and spoke of stoning him. Certainly his want of foresight deserved punishment, for on him lay the duty of guarding the town against surprise. His forays into the southern desert had been repaid by a most successful raid on his own fortress. Some of the wandering tribes, watching their chance, had thus avenged the slaughter of their neighbours or allies. In the bitterness of that hour David felt the remorse of a man whose sin has found him out. But, unless he roused himself to action, he ran greater risks than any he had yet encountered. The ruined houses and the neighbouring wastes showed no signs of bloodshed. Every person and thing had been carried off by the robbers; not a single life appeared to have been taken. With good reason David saw ground for hope. Calling to Abiathar to put on the Ephod, that he might take counsel of his Friend in heaven, he asked: 'Shall I pursue after this troop?' 'Yes,' was the answer. 'Shall I overtake them?' he then asked. Again he was answered, 'Yes.' Emboldened by answers so favourable, he asked, 'Shall I recover all?' and again 'Yes' was drawn by the high priest. Encouraged by these answers, the exiles laid aside their purpose of stoning David. From a shoreless sea of sorrow they suddenly behold the wished-for land. They may both recover their own, and seize what belongs to the robbers.

Setting out with his whole band, David tracked the robbers as far as the brook Besor. He could not miss the road. It was marked by traces of sheep and oxen and camels; by pieces of clothing, by footprints, and by other tokens of man's presence. The brook, on which he encamped for a little to refresh his wearied men, was perhaps fifteen or twenty miles from Ziklag. When they prepared again to start, two hundred of them, worn out with fatigue, were unable to proceed. Leaving them in charge of the baggage, David pushed forward

more rapidly with the other four hundred. Everything they saw showed that the rovers, unable to move quickly, and dreading no enemy, could not be far distant. At last the advanced guard stumbled on the body of a man stretched on the waste. He was not dead. Carrying him to David, who was marching with the main army, they found that he had fainted. A little water, a slice of fig-cake, and a couple of pieces of raisin-cake, brought the man round. He was soon able to answer the questions put to him. He was an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite chief. Falling sick, he had been left behind about three days before. As the foray had been unusually successful, it was not worth his master's while to attend to things like slaves, of which he had then such plenty. The south of Philistia, the south of Judah as far as Hebron, had been plundered; but the vengeance of the free-booters fell especially on Ziklag. 'We burned it with fire,' he said. The mishap to Ziklag was then plain. Knowing that all able-bodied men had been withdrawn from the south to the plains of Jezreel, the Amalekite bands fell on the country, meeting with no resistance, and carrying off everything they could lay hands on. David inquired if the reviving slave could conduct them to the robbers. He said he would, if David swore neither to kill him nor to give him up to his master. In his half-opened eyes, these Hebrews seemed a band of desert robbers in haste to join their kindred, by whom he had been left behind. It was no rash promise he made, for the roads in the desert, and the camping grounds of the tribes, are nearly as well known as the streets of a great city. The Egyptian knew where the rovers were at that moment. If carried by the strong hands of the Hebrews, he would soon guide them to the camp; and he kept his word.

It was drawing towards evening when the pursuers came in sight of the robbers. Creeping forward under shelter of the sand-hillocks which break the level of these wastes, they heard the merry noises of a rejoicing camp. From the higher

mounds cautious spies could see groups of men eating and drinking, bands of careless dancers, and sheep, oxen, and camels. Far and wide there were riot and security. As darkness came on, and blazing fires kept off the cold of a spring night, the watchers could more freely take a view of the revellers celebrating their triumphs. About twilight the pursuers made their onset. Before the rovers were aware, Hebrew swords were in the midst of the groups. The shouts and the songs of revellers, who never won so easy a triumph before, were drowned in the war-cries of foemen, or turned into the silence of death. A surprise so sudden gave them no time to think of fighting. Many were cut down at their carousals; none thought of dying like heroes, from whom the tide of fortune has turned. Four hundred young men, hurrying like cowards to the swift dromedaries in the camp, mounted and fled. The desert was a trap from which, when once caught, the robbers had no chance of escape. It was death by the sword if they faced the assailant; it was death by hunger and thirst if they concealed themselves in the ravines of the desert. Many attempted to escape by hiding behind the sand-hills, or in the dried beds of winter torrents. But they had to deal with soldiers as thoroughly acquainted with the wilderness and its people as were they themselves. For a night and a day David and his men made a search after the rovers. None escaped except the four hundred who secured the swift dromedaries. The blood feud between Hebrew and Amalekite had again borne bitter fruit. That cry for blood had never been appeased. And it was not appeased by the streams shed that night. Judged by the standard of those times, there is no reason for crying out against the slaughter of these children of the desert as a piece of cruelty. It is not an act agreeable to the rules of war as carried on among the nations of Europe. But we are not judging Europeans, who live amid the lights of modern refinement nearly three thousand years after David's time.

Some modern writers, dissatisfied with this sharp handling of these enemies, find ground for praise to the Bedouin, as we may justly call them, in the mercy which they extended towards the captive women and children: the robbers had only burned the town, and carried the people captive, but they had put none to death. The contrast between the unsparing vengeance of the Hebrew chief and the tender mercy of the desert rovers seems well fitted to disgust the reader with the former, and to awaken sympathy for the latter. But this is a surface view of the motives that influenced both. Of the cruelty and falsehood of David we have spoken already; the tender mercy of the rovers is a myth, especially if the Egyptian slave be called as a witness. Among all nations there are sufferings and conditions esteemed worse than death. To this state the women and children left in Ziklag had been reduced. Men, so regardless of the life of others as the Bedouin, did not spare these captives from any feeling of mercy. They had an object in view in carrying them off as booty: to sell them in neighbouring Egypt, or to glut their vengeance on them at leisure in the desert, or to retain them for drudges in their own tents. A fine imagination only can conjure up a vein of mercy throbbing in the bosoms of these robbers. It would be a simpler explanation to attribute the safety of the captives to the overruling hand of Providence, which brought into distinct view before the captors the advantages to themselves of saving the women and children alive, and so sheathed every sword that was thirsting for their life.

However terrible the shouts and swords of assailants might be to the robbers, they were sweetest music to the mourning slaves from Ziklag. All of them were found to be safe. After resting for a whole day, deliverers and delivered turned their faces homewards. The sheep and oxen, which the rovers had driven off from the pastures of the south, were gifted to David by the soldiery. The other spoil was restored to his



followers. As they approached the brook Besor, the two hundred who had been left behind came forth to welcome their comrades and relations. The question then arose, what share of the booty they were to receive. Selfishness induced several of the four hundred to stand out against admitting to a share those who were left behind. They have no right to it, they said. If they get back their wives and children, it is as much as they can look for. Such were the views entertained by these 'sons of Belial.' But most of the band were otherwise minded. 'Who will listen to you?' asked their leader at the selfish faction; and with the generosity of a high-minded soldier, he exclaimed, 'As the portion of him that goeth down into the battle, so shall be the portion of him that abideth by the baggage; they shall share alike.' Such was the hold of David on his followers that this decision was at once accepted. From that hour it became law in the Hebrew armies.

On the third day after their return home,<sup>1</sup> news arrived of the battle on Gilboa. It had been fought, at the most, only three days before. The Philistines in the neighbourhood of Ziklag had not heard the tidings; in this case evil tidings outstripped good. The messenger who came to David was a young Amalekite, the same who witnessed and helped the mournful death of Saul. Rent garments and earth upon his head told the watchers a tale of disaster. He asked for David, to whom alone he would deliver his message. In-

<sup>1</sup> David reached Ziklag on the third day after leaving Aphek. He was thus two whole days on the march. Then he followed the band of rovers for, say, the third and fourth days. Further, he hunted them all the fifth day. And it would take him the sixth, seventh, and eighth days at least to journey back to Ziklag with the women and spoil. On the third day after his arrival, that is, on the tenth or eleventh of our reckoning, tidings of Saul's death are brought by the young Amalekite. But this messenger left Gilboa on the evening of the battle at the latest, for early next morning the Philistines stripped the dead. And as he would make all haste to carry what he thought pleasant tidings, he cannot have taken more than three days to the journey. It is clear, then, that the battle of Gilboa was fought at any rate seven days after David withdrew from the Philistines' camp. The two armies must therefore have been facing each other for more than a week. Uncertainty is thus introduced into the meaning of 'to-morrow' in 1 Sam. xxviii. 19.

patient to hear his story, they conducted him to their leader. On being admitted into David's presence, he threw himself on the ground in token of homage. Though a stranger and a slave, the young man knew from the common talk of the beaten soldiers, whose hand they missed in the battle, and whom they considered the successor of Saul. His haste to reach Ziklag showed more plainly than could be told in words to whom the eyes of the Hebrews were turned, when they saw the shadows of defeat stretching across their ranks. 'Whence hast thou come?' demanded the exile, half guessing his news. 'Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped,' he answered. The last word betokened disaster. In answer to eager inquiries, he continued, 'The people are fled from the battle; Saul and Jonathan his son are dead.' And then the aged king was described by the young man, as seen by him lying in a sequestered dell on Gilboa, wounded by the mounted archers to the danger of his life,—so seriously that he could scarcely hope to escape from his pursuers. He had crept aside from the line of retreat; he was alone; his brave son was dead; Abner and other chiefs had been parted from him in the flight. Hearing footsteps behind, he raised himself up, leaning on his spear.<sup>1</sup> It is a friend, not a foe, who approaches. But that friend, instead of endeavouring to save a life so precious as Saul's, takes it away. His words revealed Saul making a vain effort to lift himself from the ground by leaning on his spear. 'I stood over him and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen; and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them to my lord; here they are.' The looks and manner of the speaker were those of a bringer of good tidings. A high

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this act of Saul the story related by Livy (viii. 7) of the death of Geminus Metius at the hand of Titus Manlius. When the former was thrown from his horse at the second tilt, and was either stunned or hurt by the fall, the latter pinned him to the ground with his spear, *cuspidē parmaque innisum, attollentem se ab gravi casu.*

office, a great reward, were a few of the honours which danced before his eyes, as he pulled forth the diadem and bracelet. But never did the countenance of disappointed messenger undergo a greater change. The story which he told could only awaken feelings of horror. David had twice spared Saul's life even at the risk of his own. He could not become a partner in the confessed guilt of this slave by approving his deed. Tearing his garments in sign of sorrow, David demanded, 'Whence art thou?' 'The son of a stranger, an Amalekite,' he replied, discovering too late the danger of his position. But the word 'stranger' was uttered in vain. However it might shield others from harm, it should not shield him. 'Thy blood be upon thy head,' exclaimed David, as if next of kin to the murdered man; 'thy mouth hath testified against thee.' And soon the sword of one of the exiles, who was called in to act for the avenger of blood, executed judgment on the stranger. With rent garments and loud cries, the six hundred fasted for Saul and his son during the remainder of that day. At the same time David composed an elegy on the fallen heroes, which, in accordance with Hebrew custom, he called by a special name, 'The Bow.' Probably this title was taken from the words in which he celebrated the praises of his friend Jonathan, 'From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back.'

After this mourning David sent presents from the spoil of the rovers to the elders of several cities in the south of Judah, especially to those who were likely to influence the course of events. But the Hebrews had lost faith in David from the time he entered the service of Achish, and especially when he marched to the plain of Jezreel. Few of them would be at first aware of his return to Ziklag more than a week before the battle. In most places it would be told with horror, how the hope of Israel fought against his own folk in the most disastrous fight their history had known. The blunder of

which he was guilty bore fruit in seven long years of waiting. Had he been only an outlaw in the desert when Saul fell, he might have passed at one step from an outlaw's tent to a king's palace. But David the exile, living at Ziklag under the protection of a Philistine lord, and serving as the captain of his bodyguard, was looked on with suspicions which did not cleave to David the outlaw, who spared Saul's life, and watched the flocks and herds of Hebrews. That unhappy blunder was a source of much trouble to David. Some of the chief men in Israel gave their voices in favour of his elevation to the throne, and might have carried his election, had not Abner, aspiring to the office of king-maker, turned the scale against him. But notwithstanding that captain's great name, brave men from all parts of the land, losing hope of delivering their country by other means, flocked to David at Ziklag. Among the first to come was a band of skilful slingers and archers from Saul's own tribe. Several brave Gadites from Jabesh, who had distinguished themselves by rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons, next joined him in the wilderness stronghold. But the greatest addition to his little army was made by a body of soldiers from Judah and Benjamin, more numerous, it would seem, than the defenders of Ziklag. Amasa, the cousin of David, was their leader. Uncertain whether they meant peace or war, David met them outside the walls: 'If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me,' he said, 'mine heart shall be knit unto you; but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it.' Amasa assured him of their help, 'Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse.' After that time, scarcely a day passed without new-comers hastening to rally round the banner of David. When things seemed ripe for shifting his headquarters to a place of greater name than Ziklag, David summoned Abiathar to ask counsel of God. 'Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?' was the question put

for decision. The answer was, 'Yes.' 'To Hebron?' was the next question, and again the answer was 'Yes.' 'And there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.' It was his first public anointing. The second took place in the same city amid greater pomp and higher hopes. (2 Sam. v. 3.)

## CHAPTER IX.

### LITERATURE AND WORSHIP OF THE PEOPLE.

#### (REIGN OF SAUL.)

ON turning from the home and foreign policy of King Saul to consider the literature of the people over whom he ruled, we find ourselves embarking on an inquiry from which little fruit seems likely to be reaped. Our sources of information are hints scattered here and there in a treatise of sixty pages, which contains, besides the story of his reign, an account of Eli's and Samuel's administration, along with David's rise and early adventures. Even though both the books of Samuel be used for this purpose, there are only 106 pages of Hebrew to glean information from. But the poverty of these sources is not so great as it seems. Much more is told regarding the people and their ways than a surface view of the history permits us to expect.

When we read, for example, that 'Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord' (1 Sam. x. 25), the brevity of the statement is out of all relation to the importance of the inferences which may be drawn from it. In no other passage of the first book of Samuel is the word *write* or *writing* found.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Other two words in Hebrew have the sense of *to write*. One of them, *to count* (2 Sam. xxiv. 10), or *to recount* (1 Sam. xi. 5), as if from a book, occurs twice in Samuel. The other verb is not found. *A scribe* (or *recounters*) is found twice (2 Sam. viii. 17, xx. 25). These are few examples compared with the number found in other books, such as the Pentateuch and Kings, but they are all expressive. Even the word for *counting* or *number* occurs but eight times in Samuel.

And in the second book of Samuel it may be said to occur but twice, also under circumstances still more singular: 'David wrote a letter to Joab' (2 Sam. xi. 14, 15; also i. 18). The word *book* occurs in the same passages as *write*. From the way in which Samuel's writing of a book and David's letter to Joab are mentioned in the history, books and letters were evidently matters of everyday life in the eyes of the writer. Although he uses the word for *write* in these two passages only, he regards ability to write not as an accomplishment which deserves special mention, but as an ordinary thing which might be looked for in any Hebrew. Joab was, and always had been, a soldier, bred in camps, trained to war from his youth, but he could both read and write. David also had been engaged in war and adventure nearly all his life. His boyhood and youth were spent on the uplands of Bethlehem as a shepherd, his early manhood was devoted to court and camp, his after years to the busiest work of a conqueror and a statesman. He was the youngest and the least esteemed of a large family; notwithstanding, he too, like Joab, could write and read. In that letter he told the soldier to make provision for having Uriah slain. Neither the king nor the general could allow so dangerous a message to be written or read by a secretary. Both of them could read and write. A man so wise and learned as Samuel would be able to conduct business of state by reading and writing quite as well as these two soldiers. He wrote a book. But he did more, he placed that book where it could be seen and read by the people, in whose interest it had been written. There was a recognised place for its safe keeping. And the words used to denote that place, as well as the laying up of the book in it, imply a familiarity with books and with the custody of them, which naturally points to other books treasured there under the care of those, to whom Samuel committed this writing of the kingdom. A state paper called a book, a place for its safe keeping, guardians to whose trust it could

be securely given, and free access to it by the people when any of them wished to read the engagements entered into, are all clearly implied in a dozen Hebrew words. And this laying up of books, and giving the people access to them, was a custom which had prevailed before Samuel's time. He found the writing of books existing in his day, the laying of them in a recognised place, the committing of them to known guardians. He followed the custom of an earlier age, when he handed his book of the kingdom to the keeping of the same men.<sup>1</sup>

With these clues in our hand, we can now advance some steps farther, bringing together things which lie considerably apart. Saul is said to have taken 'a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent throughout all the coasts of Israel by messengers' hand, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen.' By an unhappy addition, our English version makes Saul send the hewed oxen throughout the land, a mistake too clear to deserve refutation, even though it is accepted by critics of all shades of opinion. What did he send by the messengers' hand? David again, when despatched to the army by his father, was told: 'Look how thy brethren fare, and receive their *pledge*,' a word which occurs but twice in

<sup>1</sup> Judging from the customs of other nations in the ancient world, there is much to favour the idea of Moses having taken the first steps to found a national library for the Hebrews. Of Egypt, long before the time of Samuel, or even of Moses, it is said: 'Every temple had a library attached to it, in which the records were preserved by the priests. No doubt, Thothmes caused the history of the wars, in which he and his ancestors had distinguished themselves, and the treaties and lists of tributes he had imposed upon conquered peoples, to be inscribed upon papyrus and stowed away here. Here, too, no doubt were records of his peaceful triumphs, the temples he had built, the canals and other public works he had executed, the provisions for the endowment of the temples and its staff of priests, the local regulations for the government of the surrounding district, family genealogies, and many other things. Would that those precious papyri had survived, what a light they might have thrown upon that remote period; but alas! there is evidence that they perished on the spot in some accidental conflagration, or perhaps in some invasion of the Ethiopians, for the walls of the library are all blackened with smoke and covered with a tarry deposit.'—Villiers Stuart, *Nile Gleanings*, 148.



the Old Testament (1 Sam. xvii. 18 ; Prov. xvii. 18). What could their pledge have been but a letter to assure Jesse of their health and safety ? If David could write, and if Joab could write, David's elder brothers could also both read and write. Again, when David wrote an elegy, called *The Bow*, on Saul and Jonathan, it is said : 'He bade them teach the children of Judah *The Bow* ; behold, it is written in the book of *Jasher*.' Here, then, we have another writing, if not a collection of writings, referred to as having been committed to the custody of certain men for a definite purpose. Samuel's Law of the Kingdom, the Book of *Jasher*, the Song of the Bow, are under these men's charge. They taught the people ; they took orders in this matter from the government ; they had books in their hands for the discharge of their duties. There was thus a well-known class of men, to whom writings like *The Bow*, or the book of *Jasher*, were committed for safe keeping, and by whom they were also taught to the people. Brief though the information given regarding them be, we recognise their existence as a class, their functions as public teachers and guardians of the nation's state papers. Closely connected with this view of these men and their office, is a statement made in Deuteronomy. Moses did what Samuel is known to have done ; he 'commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God' (Deut. xxxi. 25). Evidently in this, as in other things, Samuel followed the example set to him by Moses some centuries before. But, without dwelling on that point, we are not justified in regarding the messages, sent by kings and others in ancient times, as always sent by word of mouth, and not more frequently in writing. When Jehoram, king of Israel, says of the king of Syria : 'Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy ?' (2 Kings v. 7), we would not seek to explain the sending otherwise than by supposing a

messenger or herald had come, did we not know of the letter which was presented by Naaman the leper. It is well, therefore, to exercise caution in this matter. Saul's messengers, referred to above, may have taken letters with them from the king and Samuel; and in other cases written papers may have been sent, of which we have no knowledge and no suspicion.

A people devoted to literature, as the Hebrews are known to have been, trained also to read and write, as we have reason to believe they generally were, have left scarcely any monumental records of their acquaintance with letters. Still there may have been a reason for this want of inscriptions in and about Jerusalem. Carving of flowers and animals in public places was practised in the generation after Samuel. But written inscriptions on walls and smooth rocks are not mentioned then, nor were they mentioned save once in former times. For a practice so different from the custom which prevailed in Babylon and Egypt, no reason is given. If one is sought for, it is easily found. Hebrew literature, like our own, was book-writing, not stone-writing. Time and accident, which often spared the latter, frequently destroyed the former. Hence the records of the Pharaohs remain, in part at least, while those of David and Solomon are lost, except the few pages which, under the guidance of divine wisdom, have escaped the fire and the rage of enemies.<sup>1</sup>

The view of Saul's subjects presented in the books of Samuel is that of a people who enjoyed the blessings of reading and writing. But other arts were cultivated. David, a shepherd lad, the son of a father in circumstances which were not wealthy, was renowned for his skill as a player on the harp. Before he was born, the psaltery, the drum, the pipe, and the harp were in use among the people. The existence of these musical instruments indicates also the

<sup>1</sup> On the art of writing among the ancient Greeks, see Mure, *Hist. of Grec. Lit.* iii. 397-490.

existence of a poetic literature. Much of it may have perished; but evidently the collection of national songs was contained in the work already referred to as the book of Jasher. How many of these songs remain scattered throughout the sacred writings it is impossible now to discover. But the guardians of the national literature—the members of the tribe of Levi—were not likely to leave the collecting and preserving of such poems to chance. At the tabernacle, and in the schools of the prophets, the power of the hymns to meet the wants of men was tested in practical life. From these centres they spread to the whole nation. And sacred songs formed only part of the literature cultivated in the prophetic schools; for it is impossible to exclude from the studies carried on in them the history and legislation of the country. Wherever a school of the prophets flourished, literature and law must have flourished also. But the period of greatest activity in these schools, so far as is known to history, falls long after the reign of Saul. Other things call for attention here; the hymns of the people ran a course in some respects similar to that of Grecian poetry. Three or four centuries after the reign of David, Greek poets began to write lyrics and elegies as he did. As he was a singer, so were they; and as he accompanied his songs with the harp, so did they. We may even say that as he improved the instruments of music, so did they. But the parallel can be carried farther. Of the ancient Greek lyric poets it is said: ‘In scarcely an instance, if indeed one can be found, has a lyric composition of any note been transmitted to posterity anonymously.’<sup>1</sup> In the same way David has left his mark on the lyrics and elegies which he wrote. He could not do otherwise in many cases. In some he might escape detection if he were not distinctly named as the writer. The bearing of this curious law of authorship in lyric compositions ought to be recognised, in determining the genuineness of psalm headings in the Hebrew Psalter.

<sup>1</sup> Mure, *Gr. Lit.* iii. 4.

Besides the popular literature, there appears to have also been in existence a scientific or professional literature, of which traces from time to time make their appearance in the history. A feast at the tabernacle is mentioned; a custom of vowing vows; a law of the Nazarite; certain dues given to the priests from every sacrifice; the burning of fat and incense by the priests; the eminent holiness of the ark; a law of tithing; meat-offerings, burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, and trespass-offerings; the sacredness of the oath called *cherem*, or utter destruction; the sin of eating blood with the flesh of an animal; a feast of the new moon; the law of fugitives escaped from their masters; the law against enticing to serve other gods; the law of the shewbread, with one at least of the ceremonies observed on the Sabbath morning; week or work day as opposed to the Sabbath; ceremonial purity and impurity; laws against witches; and a law which seems to be a shortened expression of the first and second commandments (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). All these and other customs or laws are distinctly referred to in the sixty pages of the first book of Samuel. Men had been appointed to high office in the state, whose duty it was to see to the right observance of these customs. But the same men had charge of Samuel's book of the Kingdom, of the book of Jasher, and of David's 'Bow.' If, then, the three last required written papers for their safe keeping and right transmission to after ages, it is asking too much of us to believe that the large and important body of laws, briefly hinted at above, was not in writing, but was transmitted by word of mouth from one age to another. A supposition so incredible for a people who were taught to read and write, and who knew by whom and where their state papers were kept, cannot be received. It is a device to evade the force of facts, not an explanation of history. The existence of other law books, then, besides Deuteronomy, follows as a matter of course from the views stated above. That they

were the middle books of the Pentateuch is the only conclusion we can come to. And that conclusion is strengthened by many undesigned coincidences between Samuel and the ritual of the Pentateuch, which now fall to be examined.

The worship of the people in Saul's reign was the worship prescribed in the books of Moses. Although this is strongly denied by many writers, the proof is convincing. Allowance has to be made on one point, the destruction of the Central Altar at Shiloh. But whether that allowance be made or not, the identity of the ritual in Saul's time with the ritual of the wilderness wanderings can be sustained by proofs which are a surprise from their number and clearness, when we consider the few pages of Hebrew from which they are drawn. The subject will be better understood if the case of those who deny this identity be stated first. Practically, then, their view is this: There was a small temple at Shiloh or Nob. There was also a sacred ark. Both inside and outside everything was on an insignificant scale. The child Samuel slept in the one room which formed the temple. He even opened the doors of it in the morning. As Eli the high priest sat at the doorpost of the temple, it cannot have been a tent. Sacrifices were offered there; but the laws observed in offering them were unlike the laws laid down by Moses. Nor was the sacred dress worn by the high priest in later times regarded with the reverence, which is accorded to it by the Mosaic law. Hence inferences are drawn against the antiquity of that law. Even Samuel's little coat was an infringement of one of its precepts. Such, then, is the view sometimes taken of the ritual as presented to a reader in the book of Samuel. The case is wholly different. But, for the sake of clearness, we shall arrange the proof under different heads.

*First, The Temple at Shiloh was a large place.*

(1) The pan used at Shiloh for boiling the flesh of peace-offerings goes by the same name as the laver used for washing in the wilderness tabernacle. But the laver was made out of

the looking-glasses 'of the women which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation' (Ex. xxxviii. 8), words which are repeated in the story of Eli and his sons (1 Sam. ii. 22). As the word *assemble* indicates apparently an organized service, we get from it a glimpse of duties requiring numbers and space for their right discharge at Shiloh as well as in the wilderness. And when Hannah left her child with Eli, her acquaintance with these women enabled her to choose from among them those, who were best fitted to act as guardians for a child of his tender years. Precisely, also, as the site of Jerusalem still bears witness to the extent of its temple courts, so the site of Shiloh warrants a belief in the large space occupied by the tabernacle. Only one spot on the hill-top, anciently occupied by that city, could have received the Mosaic tent with its surrounding court. At that place the hill slopes down to a broad shoulder, across which has been cut a sort of level court, 77 feet wide and 412 feet long. In some places the rock 'is scarped to a height of 5 feet, and along the sides are several excavations and a few small cisterns.'<sup>1</sup>

(2) The space at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation was of considerable extent. Close by the entrance was the throne of the high priest, the lordly seat of the judge of the land. Unfortunately our English translators have twice missed the idea conveyed in the Hebrew word here used. 'Eli the priest,' they say, 'sat upon a seat by a doorpost of the temple of the Lord;' and again, 'Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching.' They mistook the meaning of the word. Often as the word occurs in the historical books from Genesis onward, it never means aught but a seat of honour. In about seventy cases it denotes a royal throne, such as the throne of Pharaoh, or of the Persian emperor, or of kings of Israel. It is found three times in the story of Eli, always with the definite article, the throne on which the judge of the

<sup>1</sup> *Pal. Exp. Q. S.*, January 1873, p. 83.

nation sat. As he watched by the wayside for tidings of battle, he sat in this chair of state. He was not watching by the doorpost of the temple; for its rock-cut court was on the north side of Shiloh, and the road he sat by was on the south side, with the houses of the town between them. Attendants were about him, for he asked them the meaning of the noise inside the city when the messenger who had come was telling to the people his story of defeat and ruin. Clearly, therefore, the space in front of the door of the tabernacle, in which the judge's throne was placed, close beside a doorpost of the temple entrance, was of considerable size. As in many Eastern cities, it was at once a public square and a court of justice.

(3) The words, 'Temple of the Lord where the ark was,' have been turned to a strange use. 'Samuel, as a servant of the sanctuary, who had special charge of the doors, actually slept "in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was." To our English translators this statement seemed so incredible that they have ventured to change the sense against the rules of the language.'<sup>1</sup> On this showing, the sleeping-place of the boy was beside the ark, or, as would now be said, in the holy of holies. Bishop Colenso goes farther: he makes the tabernacle of the congregation Joshua's sleeping-place. But the translators of our version have neither changed the sense nor broken the rules of the Hebrew tongue. They have strictly kept to both. The sleeping-place of Samuel proves, according to Graf and his followers, that there was nothing common to the Shiloh temple and the tabernacle, or that there was no holy place, no holy of holies, no day of atonement, no Levitical law in Eli's time; while the sleeping-place of Joshua is equally full of proof, though it is recorded in the very heart of the Levitical law-books! With as much force may most singular conclusions be drawn from Luke's statements regard-

<sup>1</sup> Graf, *G. B.* p. 56. Colenso, Part vii. 116. The quotation is from Smith, *Old Testament*, 258. Colenso says, 'Samuel seems to have slept in this building.'

ing Paul: 'The Jews, which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.' Paul was neither priest nor Levite. He could not have been in the temple. If the criticism, which has been employed in proving the impossible in Samuel's case, were applied in Paul's, the world would laugh. According to the theorists, there could not have been a Levitical system in Paul's days.<sup>1</sup>

The words of the passage under review run thus in the Hebrew: 'Not yet had a lamp of God gone out (and Samuel was asleep) in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was.' Samuel was sleeping in the temple, where the ark of God was, but he was not sleeping in the most holy place, where the ark was. To sleep at the side of the ark is the meaning forced on the words by Graf: to sleep in the same temple with the ark is the inference most people would draw, although the historian merely says, Samuel was asleep, without mentioning or even hinting at the precise place. Graf and his friends invent an additional theory to keep themselves right. There was only one room in this temple. Samuel slept there; the ark was kept there, and the Levitical system was unknown. Our translators required no crutch of the kind to keep them in motion. Trusting to common sense, and in thorough agreement with the genius of the Hebrew tongue, they regarded 'and Samuel was asleep' as a parenthetic clause, standing by itself, and severed from the context. Failure to see the parenthesis in a passage has frequently caused perplexity in interpretation.<sup>2</sup> It has done so here. Eli and the priests must therefore have resided in outbuildings round the temple. In the smaller and less esteemed place at Nob more

<sup>1</sup> *The temple* included the courts as well as the buildings.

<sup>2</sup> Compare a similar clause, 2 Sam. iv. 5. See also 2 Sam. viii. 13.



than eighty priests waited at the altar, and must have had houses close by. In similar outbuildings at Shiloh, Samuel was lodged, evidently close to the high priest.

(4) But, it is said, the temple at Shiloh must have been small, for Samuel opened the doors of it in the morning. The elaborate arrangements for opening the doors of the temple on Moriah, in our Lord's time, seem to make this inference clear. But there is no clearness about the proof. Samuel the child was Eli's favourite page. He carried the old man's orders to priests and Levites in waiting. When he got the revelation about Eli's house, he 'lay until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel,' etc. (1 Sam. iii. 15, 16). Eli expected the boy to tell him what had happened overnight as soon as he came to the high priest's room in the morning. But he was disappointed. The child came as usual for instructions, and went away to deliver them, for 'he feared to show Eli the vision.' Then the high priest broke the silence himself, by afterwards summoning his page, and requesting him to tell all that he heard.

*Second, The ritual at Shiloh was the same as the ritual in the wilderness.*

(1) The sacrifices were the same in both cases, and regulated by the same laws.

The first passage which shows distinct traces of this sameness is the following: 'The sons of Eli were sons of Belial: they knew not the Lord. And the priests' custom with the people was, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither' (1 Sam. ii. 12). The words which introduce this tale of wrong-doing show clearly how deeply these actings were resented by the people. 'Sons of

Belial,' or worthless fellows, is the name applied to the high priest's sons. The phrase had not occurred much in literature before this time. Moses appears to have been the first who used it, and that only towards the end of his life (Deut. xiii. 14); in Judges, it is found twice; but in Samuel, where it next appears, it occurs ten times. Here, then, we have a manifest reference to Deuteronomy, besides a warning that the things done by Eli's sons were not according to law or custom. If, now, we set down the story of Eli's sons side by side with the law of the Levite in Deuteronomy, we shall have no difficulty in seeing the indebtedness of the former to the popular law-book. Unfortunately our translators did not observe that the writer of Samuel was quoting from it word for word.

DEUT. xviii. 3.

And the due of the priests from the people from the sacrificers of a sacrifice : he shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

1 SAM. ii. 13.<sup>1</sup>

And the due of the priests from the people every man sacrificing a sacrifice.—  
The priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook in his hand : all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself.

Wellhausen imagines he has discovered that ten verses of the chapter, from which this quotation is made (1 Sam. ii. 27-36), were inserted after Josiah's reign by some one who had then read Deuteronomy. But there is at present no taint of suspected tampering with the passage under review. It is believed specially to bear a character of unquestionable originality. The law in Deuteronomy begins with *priests*, and ends with *priest*; in like manner the story in Samuel's life begins and ends. But in both books, 'the priests' due from the people' is spoken of, not 'the heave-offerings of the holy things which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord.' Animals slain for food, or popular sacrifices (Deut. xii. 20, 21), are referred to, not

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Colenso, failing to see the quotation here, pronounces the two passages 'quite at variance,' which is true enough of the illegality of the priest's conduct.

victims meant for the altar. Instead of being content with their legal dues from the former, Eli's sons sent a servant, that is, a young man or a Levite, to take better pieces than the law allowed. The priest, then, is seen with an attendant, a helper in sacred things. There is no reason for regarding that servant as other than an attendant Levite. He comes with a flesh-hook in his hand, a word of rare occurrence, but named three times among the furniture of the tabernacle (Ex. xxvii. 3). As it is here called three-pronged, it was probably of unusual size, and well fitted for the wicked purpose of the priests. He then strikes it into the pot which the sacrificer was using to cook the pieces of the slain beast. Here, then, we have a commentary on the way the Deuteronomic law was broken by these priests. But everything about the story brings before us the altar of the wilderness, or such a sacrificial feast as would be celebrated on the plains of Moab.

We come now to the second class of wrongful deeds done by the sons of Eli. It was their duty to offer priestly or atoning sacrifices. Their share of the flesh, in such cases, was also fixed by law. But they were not content with it.

LEV. vii. 31, 32.

And the priest shall burn the fat upon the altar; but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'. And the right shoulder shall ye give unto the priest for an heave-offering of the sacrifices of your peace-offerings.

1 SAM. ii. 15.

Before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest: for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and take as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force.

The burning of the fat<sup>1</sup> was here a priestly duty of sacred obligation, like the draining of all blood from an animal slain

<sup>1</sup> *To burn the fat* is literally *to incense the fat*, or to make it smoke away like incense. The writer of Samuel agrees with Leviticus in this use of the word. But in Kings and Chronicles it has the meaning, *to offer incense*, or simply *to offer*.

for food. Offerers knew this duty of the priests. But in Shiloh they were suspicious of Eli's sons: 'Let them burn the fat at once,' they said. The eagerness of the priests to get flesh to roast evidently filled the sacrificers with apprehensions of sacrilege. Part of the fat might be kept back by the priests to use for the roast (Lev. iii. 17). The sin of Eli's sons, in these peace-offerings, did not lie in asking more than their rightful share. The law commanded the people to make the Levites sharers in the feasts, which followed the sacrifices. And, probably, the favour of receiving a share had come to be regarded as a right. But the sin of the priests lay both in delaying, for reasons unrecorded, to burn the fat, and in using or threatening to use force.

(2) The offering of incense may be placed after this head of offering sacrifice.

'Did I choose thy father,' said the prophet to Eli, 'out of all the tribes of Israel to me for priest, for to offer upon mine altar, for to burn incense, for to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the fire-offerings of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation?' (1 Sam. ii. 28, 29). The tone, the words, and the ideas in this extract are the same as in the Pentateuch. The outstanding duty, which distinguished priest from Levite and layman, was to burn incense before the golden altar, in a part of the tabernacle open to priests only. Now this duty is expressed in two ways, either by the simple verb, or by the verb and its noun, *to incense incense*, or to offer incense. In the books of Samuel it is spoken of as the priests' work in the only passage in which the two words occur. Samuel sacrifices, which even the law allowed him to do in one sense at least; but nowhere does Samuel appear offering incense. In the books of Kings, again, princes and people are repeatedly found usurping this purely priestly office. Sacrificing was too small a thing for them; they

burned incense on the high places. The offering of incense was thus specially a priestly duty. But the phrase quoted above from Samuel, 'for to offer incense before me,' containing as it does both the verb and the noun, occurs in only one other passage of the Old Testament. When the rebels who followed the counsels of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were struck dead, their censers were made into 'a covering for the altar, to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to *offer incense* before the Lord' (Num. xvi. 40). The passage in Samuel points a reader back to the story of these rebels. The right of offering incense was then vindicated for the Levitical priesthood, and for it alone; and when, in these later ages, this right is again set forth as a special privilege of Aaron's sons, the doom of the rebels and the events of that terrible day were evidently before the mind of the prophet who spake, and of the priest who heard the message.

(3) The law of feasts in Samuel's time was the same as the Mosaic law.

Elkanah, Samuel's father, was accustomed to visit Shiloh yearly, 'to worship and to sacrifice.' This visit is generally supposed to have been paid at the feast of tabernacles. But to infer from the brief narrative that this was the only feast then known at Shiloh is too sweeping a conclusion; while to affirm, as Graf does, that Elkanah went to Shiloh 'only once a year' is a reading into the story of his own wish that it had so spoken. If these inferences hold good for the distant days of Samuel, they are equally good for the better known days of our Lord. His parents, too, were accustomed to visit the Central Altar. Like Samuel's, they seem to have paid a yearly visit only: they 'went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.' Either, therefore, the argument built on Elkanah's custom is wrong, or only one feast was observed in the

time of Joseph and Mary. So dangerous is it to draw an argument from a historian's silence! But the story of Elkanah's visit to Shiloh contains no mention of a yearly feast. The business he went on may have been entirely different. He was a Levite. Duty may have taken him to the Central Altar every year as a priest's assistant, not as an Israelite observing a feast; and the one supposition is as probable as the other. 'He went up to sacrifice and to worship,' expresses a Levite's duties as well as it does a visit paid in observance of a feast. However, in the history in Samuel, the weekly festival of the Sabbath is recognised, with some at least of the ceremonies prescribed in the Mosaic law. Even the word for a week-day (work-day) is once found. Nor does it occur again till the time of Ezekiel. A monthly or new moon feast is also observed. But festivals of a week's duration are twice implied in the directions given by Samuel to Saul: 'Seven days shalt thou tarry;' and the phrase for seven days is exactly the same as in the law of the feasts in Leviticus.

(4) The furniture of the temple in Shiloh was the same as the furniture of the Mosaic tabernacle.

The holy place in the latter contained the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense, or the golden altar. We find the same furnishings at Shiloh. From the upright stem of the candlestick branched out three golden curves on each side, rising to a level with the main stem. There were thus seven lamps, which were probably all kept burning during the night. Only two or three may have remained lighted during the day. But the going out of a lamp of the candlestick in the night would thus indicate the approach of morning. Regarded in this way, we can understand the incident referred to in the words, 'Not yet had a lamp<sup>1</sup> gone out (and Samuel was asleep) in the temple of

<sup>1</sup> Gesenius is puzzled with this word in the Hebrew. 'Once used of the candlestick,' he says, for which he has no authority whatever.

Jehovah, where was the ark of God.'<sup>1</sup> According to the experience of Jewish priests many ages afterwards, all the lamps of the candlestick did not go out at the same time. Not one of them had gone out when the vision came to the child Samuel. The incident did not take place immediately after Samuel lay down to sleep. It was long past midnight; but the first streaks of dawn had not yet touched the sky; not a lamp of the candlestick was gone out. Again we have in few words a picture of things at Shiloh, which differs in no respect from the picture painted of things in the wilderness. Let the words be looked at more closely. The 'candlestick' is not mentioned in the life of Samuel; the lamps of it are not mentioned; only *a lamp* is mentioned, but in such a connection as to prove the existence of the other six, and the candlestick too. This idea of the ever-burning lamps of the golden candlestick had sunk deeply into Hebrew thought. At a later period it is seen in historical fact and in popular proverb. When David's men, alarmed at the danger he once encountered in fighting with a giant, refused to let him run like risks again, they assigned as their reason almost the very words here used, 'Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the (light) lamp of Israel' (2 Sam. xxi. 17; Prov. xx. 27).

The table of shewbread existed at Nob, and may reasonably be supposed to have existed also in Shiloh, while the purpose to which it was applied and the rules that were followed are unmistakeably the same as are set down in the Mosaic law (Lev. xxiv. 5-9). Another piece of furniture in Shiloh, as in the wilderness, was the golden altar or the altar of incense, which

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 3, 7. The words here translated *not yet* and *was asleep* are obviously used in these meanings in the passage. The word *temple* occurs for the first time in three passages of this book, 1 Sam. i. 9, iii. 3; 2 Sam. xxii. 7. It is used by the historian and by David. We may therefore assume that it came into use after David formed the purpose of building a house or temple (2 Sam. vii.), and began to collect materials. At an early period, it also meant a king's palace, Ps. xlv. 8, 15; Prov. xxx. 28. Both these significations it continued to retain.

is referred to in the prophet's message to Eli (1 Sam. ii. 28). Outside of the tabernacle was another altar, called the brazen altar or altar of burnt-offerings. Its existence in Shiloh is placed beyond doubt by the doings of Eli's sons, although the names brazen altar and golden altar do not reappear till we come to the book of Kings. There are other singular coincidences with the Pentateuch in this passage of Samuel. The prophet, who speaks to Eli, calls the priests' portions *the fire-offerings of the children of Israel*. But the general grant of these offerings is found first in Deut. xviii. 1, where they are called *the fire-offerings of Jehovah*, a form of speech which a reviser or improver of Samuel would certainly not have changed. Besides, the use of the words *kick* and *dwelling* shows what book was in the speaker's mind. He asks, 'Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice?' He was thinking of the first and only other use of the word, in 'Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked' (Deut. xxxii. 15). And the term *dwelling* is unusual in the Pentateuch as well as Samuel. While it occurs twice in the latter, used in both cases by this prophet, it occurs but once in the former (Deut. xxvi. 15). A sacred dwelling, such as heaven itself, is meant. Borrowing is thus proved beyond doubt. But inserting words and verses in the book of Samuel is neither proved nor rendered probable.

Among the furniture of the tabernacle at Shiloh was another and most holy symbol of the faith, 'the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth (between) the cherubim' (1 Sam. iv. 4). Although the phrase 'which dwelleth (between) the cherubim' occurs here for the first time in this dress, the original passage was undoubtedly Ex. xxv. 22, or Num. vii. 89. No other part of the Pentateuch contains the words. Isaiah borrowed the form of them in Samuel, not that in Numbers, when he used the figure in the prayer of King Hezekiah. Other writers followed the same model.<sup>1</sup> The ancient phrase,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxvii. 16 (2 Kings xix. 15). See also 2 Sam. vi. 2; 1 Chron. xiii. 6; Ps. lxxx. 1, xcix. 1.



as found in Numbers, requires the word *between* to be used. But the writer of Samuel, adopting a mode of speech which may have been common in his day, as it certainly was common afterwards, shortened the phrase by leaving out *between*. Our own English tongue has words and phrases shortened in the same way. But we are expected to believe that the verse in Numbers was written during the Babylonian captivity, and the phrase in Samuel inserted by a reviser, no one knows when. Even the cherubim on the mercy-seat have come under suspicion. Graf sneers at the idea of them having ever been there.

The holiness of the ark is borne witness to in the life of Samuel in a way which suggests an intimate acquaintance with the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua. When the priests removed it from one place to another in the wilderness, they were said to *bear* it by the lifting staves. They themselves were called 'bearers of the ark.' These, then, were professional words. At the close of Eli's administration the word *bear* is used to describe the way in which his sons brought the ark to the camp of Israel at Aphek (1 Sam. iv. 4). But after it fell into the Philistines' hands, the word was not used. Other six verbs express their dealings with it. A careful avoidance of the proper term during this time of captivity, combined with a return to the use of it in David's reign (2 Sam. vi. 13), is not an accident. It indicates acquaintance with the legal language of the priests in their written books. But when Eli's sons bore the ark from Shiloh to Aphek, it was not exposed to public gaze in its passage through the country and in the camp of Israel. The tone of the story proves this. Eli did what Aaron and his sons did, 'took down the covering veil, and covered the ark of testimony with it' (Num. iv. 5). This covering over requires to be borne in mind. After its seven months' captivity the Philistines sent the ark back 'to its place' on a new cart. They expected the kine to take the road to Bethshemesh, upwards

of twelve miles to the south-east of Ekron (1 Sam. vi. 9). But this was not the way to 'its place' at Shiloh, nor was Bethshemesh the nearest city of Israel. Aijalon was as near to Ekron, and was also on the road to Shiloh; Timnah and Zorah were nearer. There must have been a reason for the Philistine priests speaking as they did of Bethshemesh. And that reason is plain. They knew it to be the nearest city inhabited by Hebrew priests (Josh. xxi. 16). But Aijalon, though a Levitical, was not a priestly city, nor Zorah, nor Timnah. The choice of the Philistine priests or diviners thus clearly implies the existence of priestly and Levitical cities in Israel. But the Philistines were also aware of the propriety of sending a *trespass-offering* back with the ark. Four times is the word used under circumstances which suggest an acquaintance with the book of the law on the part of the author of Samuel.<sup>1</sup> Quite in keeping with this choice of a city and a trespass-offering, the historian records what happened as soon as the oxen stood still in the fields of the city: 'The Levites took down the ark of the Lord, and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the Lord.' These men of Bethshemesh were priests. They were entitled to handle the ark by its lifting staves, which they did when they took it down from the cart. But the story proceeds: 'He smote the men of Bethshemesh because they looked on the ark of the Lord' (1 Sam. vi. 19). Our English version makes the men 'look into the ark.'<sup>2</sup> But the meaning seems different. The priests lifted the covering veil off the ark, perhaps from no motive of curiosity, but to make sure that everything was right. 'To look' was a thing forbidden on pain of death to the Levites not priests (Num. iv. 20). Aaron and his sons *took down* the covering veil, and put it on

<sup>1</sup> It occurs in Leviticus and Numbers thirty-three times; Samuel four times; Ps. lxxiii. 21; Isa. liii. 10; Prov. xiv. 9; and 2 Kings xii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The Septuagint has, 'The sons of Jeconiah among the men of Bethshemesh were not glad (*i.e.* had cause to grieve) because they looked on the ark.'

the ark in the most holy place ; here his sons *took down* the ark (the word is the same) and lifted the covering in the fields of Bethshemesh, and before a gathering crowd (Num. iv. 5). A great disaster was the result.

Frightened by the havoc caused, the priests resolve to get quit of their treasure: 'Who,' they ask, 'is able to stand before this holy Lord God?' These also were professional words. In another passage in which they specially occur (Deut. x. 8), Levi is said to have been 'separated to stand before the Lord to minister unto him ;' but in similar circumstances David says, 'How shall the ark of the Lord come to me' (2 Sam. vi. 9)? These priests of Bethshemesh believed they were discharging a duty of their office when the disaster happened. Acting like their heathen neighbours, they hastened to get the ark out of their hands. But the plan they took was different. They do as men would do who have the right to command the services of others. They do not request, but they order 'the dwellers in Kirjath-jearim to come down from their heights and fetch it up.' These 'dwellers' were priests' servants, made temple slaves by Joshua (Josh. ix. 17), and bound to obey their masters' orders. The writer of Samuel afterwards lets his readers know how well he was acquainted with the lineage and position of these people (2 Sam. xxi. 2). 'Even Beeroth,' one of their cities, 'was counted to Benjamin' (2 Sam. iv. 2). As their town lay on the road to Shiloh, this may have been the pretence used by the priests of Bethshemesh in sending them the order. But the servants were nobler than the masters. Whether they *bore* the ark by a hill path now unknown in that desolate district, or carried it round past Zorah, they went no farther than Abinadab's house on a hill on the mountain spur which was crowned by their own city. Orders of some sort were given to them to stop there. As the Levites were the superiors of their town, and entitled to exact service from them, one or more of the class may have been resident in the place.

While there is nothing to identify Abinadab and his son Eleazar, who was set apart 'to the charge of the ark,' with the descendants of the ancient heathen in Kirjath, there is much in the narrative to identify them with the Levitical tribe. At a later period, too, Zadok the high priest officiated at Gibeon, another city a few miles distant, inhabited by temple slaves.

This narrative of the captivity of the ark is therefore in keeping with the recorded worship and ritual of the Pentateuch. All the coincidences discovered are contained in less than two pages of Hebrew. They are also intimately bound up with the story; indeed, they run through it like threads of life, uniting all the parts into one whole. A reviser's hand or an interpolator's would have made several points clear, which the ancient author, writing for people who had as correct a knowledge of the ritual and customs as he had, did not dwell on so fully as we could desire. But there is no revision here. There is a narrative of facts resting on the same Pentateuch and the same book of Joshua which are in our hands to-day.

(5) The garments of the high priest were the same at Shiloh and Nob as in the wilderness. Not only is this denied, but the wearing of a linen ephod or vest and of a *me'il* or coat by Samuel has been turned into an argument against the existence of the Pentateuch in his time: 'Samuel ministered before the Lord, a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat (*me'il*), and brought it to him from year to year' (1 Sam. ii. 18, 19). According to some writers, the Mosaic law forbade the wearing of an ephod (or vest) and a *me'il* (or long mantle) by any Hebrew but the high priest. Starting with this idea, they have built on Samuel's clothes a formidable battery against the antiquity of the Pentateuch. Had his mother known the Mosaic law, she never would have made for him clothes which only a high priest could wear. Hence the Pentateuch was unknown to Eli, to Samuel, and to the priests

and people of Shiloh. But two ephods are mentioned in Hebrew history; one is called *The Ephod*, far excelling in glory and honourable use; another is called *an ephod*, or a linen ephod. The former was a splendid vest with shoulder pieces made of precious stones set in gold, and a double breastplate having a pocket behind and twelve stones graven with the tribal names in front. The *me'il* or robe of this Ephod, was a mantle 'of woven work, all blue,' having upon its hems 'pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, twined, and bells of pure gold, . . . a bell and a pomegranate round about the hem of the robe to minister in.' Such, then, were *The Ephod*, the glorious ephod, and the *me'il*, with which the high priest entered the holy of holies once a year. He alone could wear these magnificent robes; others could not. But *a linen ephod* was a different thing. It was worn by ordinary priests, as by the eighty-five slain at Nob; it was worn also by David. Not a word is ever said about the use of this robe being confined to the priests, far less to the high priest. Our knowledge of the *me'il* or mantle, again, is fuller than our knowledge of the ephod. Jonathan wore one, which David got in a present. Tamar also wore a *me'il*; Job and his three friends had that article of dress; and Ezra also, on his coming from Babylon, was clothed in the same upper robe. The glorious *me'il* of the Ephod belonged to the high priest alone; but the common robe of that name was worn by men and women of other classes and of all ages. To say that Samuel's mother set the Mosaic law aside, or rather acted in such a way as to show the law did not exist in her day, because year by year she brought a *me'il* for her little son, is to affirm what is in direct opposition to known facts. Ezra, whose knowledge of the law is universally allowed, must then have broken it as well as Samuel's mother, for he tells us twice of the *me'il* which he wore. Although he was a priest, he was no more the high priest than Samuel, and no more entitled than he to wear a kind of

mantle, which it is now maintained Aaron and his successors alone had a right to wear.

We cannot fail, then, to give its proper meaning to the word ephod when it suddenly bursts upon us in the story of David. 'Is there not here under thine hand spear or sword?' he asks of the high priest at Nob. 'And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold it, wrapped in the garment behind *the Ephod*' (1 Sam. xxi. 9). For eighteen pages of Hebrew the word ephod had not occurred in Samuel. Where it is last mentioned, it so slips in as to make it plain that an ordinary ephod is meant (1 Sam. xiv. 3). But there is no doubt in David's case. *The Ephod*, with splendid shoulder pieces and dazzling breastplate, was before him and the high priest, in some repository of the new temple at Nob. Behind it was Goliath's sword, and apparently Goliath's garment, for the words run, 'wrapped in the garment,' not 'wrapped in a cloth.' A picture so distinct needs no explaining. The sword of Goliath, the garment, the Ephod, are definite ideas familiar to David as well as to the high priest. What the two first were to the soldier, the third was to the priest; his own, and yet not his own, but God's.

The *Me'il* and the Ephod of the high priest went by a special name. Along with his inner tunic, they were called *The Garments*. A correct use of words might require that phrase in many cases, without reference to the high priest and his robes. In point of fact it occurs only seven times in the Old Testament. Five of them refer to the high priest. Of these five three are used in a way which leaves no doubt on the appropriation of *The Garments*, or *The very Garments*, to the high priests' robes of office (Ex. xxix. 5; Lev. viii. 2, xxi. 10). Other two require no discussion (Ex. xxviii. 4; Zech. iii. 4). Two passages remain to be examined (2 Kings xxii. 14; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 22). In reality they are the same. 'Huldah the prophetess, wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, son

of Harhas, keeper of *The Garments*. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion here: as there was a wardrobe chamber in Nob for the state robes, so there was one in Jerusalem, of which Shallum was keeper.

But the proof is not complete. A link is still wanting. If the ephod mentioned in the history of David was truly the ephod made in the wilderness, some hint might be expected of its glorious appointments,—either the shoulder pieces with their precious adornment, or the breastplate, with its pocket containing unknown but curious things. Shoulder pieces are not mentioned in the book of Samuel, nor the splendid front of the breastplate. But at a later stage of the history, and in the most incidental way, that which was behind the front, and which implies the whole breastplate, is mentioned in one word, once and once only: ‘When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets’ (1 Sam. xxviii. 6, 15). All three methods were known in his time. If the Urim was common in his day, it is seldom mentioned. What it was we do not even know. In only seven places altogether is it found; two of these have to be at once dismissed as telling us nothing, one of the others is now before us, and the remaining four are these—all of them from the Pentateuch:—

Ex. xxviii. 30.

And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart, when he goeth in before the Lord.

NUM. xxvii. 18–21.

Joshua shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask for him after the manner (custom or judgment) of the Urim before the Lord.

LEV. viii. 8.

And he put the breastplate upon him; also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim.

DEUT. xxxiii. 8.

And of Levi he said, Let thy Urim and thy Thummim be with thy holy one.

The source, from which the custom in Samuel was borrowed, is now clear. As Joshua stood before Eleazar, so Saul stood before a high priest of his own making.

As Joshua *asked* at Jehovah by the custom of the Urim, so Saul *asked* at Jehovah. If a coincidence of fact and phrase so singular as this between Numbers and Samuel be but the touch of a reviser's vanished hand, the least sceptical may well doubt all results of modern criticism. Whatever the Urim may really have been, it was certainly something put in the pocket of the high priest's breastplate. But this something could not be consulted till the priest applied his hand to the breastplate and drew it out, or examined it otherwise. 'Withdraw thine hand,' Saul cried to the high priest, when he wished the consulting stopped. If, then, the chapter in Numbers, which first shows this use of the Urim, was not written till one hundred, or perhaps six hundred, years after Saul's death, both history and criticism may be pronounced arts in which it is hopeless to look for fixed principles. But, besides, the breastplate, though not mentioned in the book of Samuel, is hinted at. It contained the names of the twelve tribes, graven on twelve precious stones. Levi was one; Joseph was another; but Ephraim and Manasseh did not appear. When the fierce debate was proceeding at Gilgal between Israel and Judah, the speakers for Israel said, 'We have ten parts in the king' (2 Sam. xix. 43). They referred to the arrangement of the precious stones on the breastplate. Levi, as a tribe scattered over the country, was common to all the others. Eleven remained, of which ten stood out against Judah. The reference to the breastplate names in this dispute is not doubtful.

(6) The law of vows was the same at Shiloh as in the Pentateuch. Thus, at the very beginning of the book of Samuel, we read, Hannah 'vowed a vow;' but when the time came for thinking of fulfilling that vow, she delays, and allows her husband, Elkanah, to visit Shiloh without her, 'to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow.' Without doubt, the oath to dedicate the child Samuel to the sanctuary, which was binding on her, had become binding on him too.



The vow was hers ; not spoken loud out so as to be heard by him. But the vow was his also : ‘Do what seemeth thee good ; tarry until thou have weaned him ; only the Lord *establish* his word.’ A glance at the law of vows in Numbers (xxx. 13) makes the whole matter clear. ‘Every vow,’ it says, ‘and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may *establish* it, or her husband may make it void.’ We cannot help falling back on this law when we read of Hannah’s vow, which was hers, and yet was his, her husband’s, also ; and of which he used the very word used in Numbers to mark out a husband’s *right*, ‘The Lord *establish* His word.’ The law of vows at Shiloh was the same as the law of vows in the wilderness. But it was a special vow that the mother made, *first*, of service to the Lord all the days of the child’s life ; and *second*, ‘there shall no razor come upon his head.’ The second part of the vow is borrowed, word for word, from the instructions given about the rearing of Samson (Judg. xiii. 5). The mere words of the law, again, are different, for they run, ‘No razor shall pass over his head.’ We shall find a freedom of treatment in the writer of Samuel when borrowing from the books of Moses, as well as an exactness of quotation : the one is as useful as the other in the sure but delicate tests we have repeatedly to apply for the discovery of truth.

Other examples of the law of vows occur in the history. Saul was commissioned to carry out the vow of utter destruction against Amalek. He even made the same vow against his own people, and to the danger of his own son, Jonathan. At a later period Absalom professed to have uttered a vow during his exile at Geshur in Syria : ‘If the Lord shall bring me again unto Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.’ He asked his father’s leave to discharge this duty, as the spirit, if not the letter, of the law in Numbers required him to do : ‘Let me go and pay my vow (which I have vowed unto the Lord) in Hebron’ (2 Sam. xv. 7, 8). Whatever this vow may have been, a great feast was in some way part of it, for

he was allowed by David to invite two hundred men to go with him from Jerusalem. One thing is plain. When Absalom fled to Geshur for vindicating the majesty of the law by killing Amnon, he offered a slight to his own birthplace, Hebron, the city of refuge for manslayers belonging to Judah. Amnon deserved death by the law. David allowed him to escape. Absalom, as next of kin to his sister Tamar, then became the law's minister of vengeance. But Geshur was not the place he ought to have fled to. Hebron was the place provided for him by the law of Moses till the authorities made inquisition into blood. Was this vow a making of amends to his birthplace for the wrong he thus did the city and its people? Was the great feast he proposed to hold, with his father's knowledge and countenance, a reparation to the citizens for his distrust of their protection? 'He sacrificed sacrifices,' it is said; just as his imitator, Adonijah, 'sacrificed (not *slew*) sheep and oxen and fat cattle' (1 Kings i. 9, 25). He held a popular feast in Hebron, as the law of the central altar allowed; he was not offering priestly sacrifices.

## CHAPTER X.

### RECONSTRUCTION OF ALL-ISRAEL.

(2 SAM. ii. 4-xi. 27 ; 1 CHRON. xi. 1-xix. 19.)

KINGLY government had now been tried among the Hebrews for more than a generation. To all appearance it had failed to attain the ends for which it was established. It had not united the people successfully to make head against foreign foes. On the contrary, it had broken the nation into pieces which could scarcely ever be brought together again by the genius of man. The high-priesthood, the most abiding symbol of the oneness of the twelve tribes, could scarcely be said to exist. Jealousies and heartburnings had been freely sown among the leading men by the king. High offices, important trusts, wide estates, were given to aliens and unworthy flatterers, while men of mark in the country were passed over. All the high hopes with which Saul was greeted shortly after his accession had come to nothing. The strands of national life, which he once had it in his power to plait into the strong cord of national unity, had one by one slipped from his grasp, until they became hopelessly broken or entangled. He had reigned to little purpose. He had shown the Hebrews what they could do; but by not doing it, he had turned their strength into weakness. After showing them the power of union under one head, he had split the nation into factions. After repeatedly leading them to victory, he first broke their spirit and then involved them in ruinous defeat. At the end of his reign the twelve tribes were farther from union than at its commencement. An attempt was made to secure unity

and strength under Saul. It succeeded at first, but its ultimate failure quenched the hopes and well-nigh the attempts of patriotism.

One of David's first steps, after taking up his abode in Hebron, was the issuing of an order to the learned men of the tribe of Judah to teach the people under their charge the lament he made on Saul and Jonathan. His object in this appears to have been to show how truly he mourned over the princes, who fell fighting for their native land. He was imitating the lawgiver in thus ordering a song to be taught to the people. His next step was to send a message of thanks to the men of Jabesh for their gallantry in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his three sons. But this show of zeal was not enough to gain the confidence he had forfeited. Abner had escaped from the battle of Gilboa. He had earned the gratitude of his countrymen by hazarding his life for their independence, while David was eating the bread of the enemy in the enemy's land. When, therefore, he pronounced against receiving David as king, most of the people followed his leading. Probably, in taking this step, Abner was really afraid of losing the power he had in Saul's time. At least it was evident that he might retain all power in his own hands, by placing Saul's surviving son on the throne. The name of this prince was Ishbaal. He was forty years of age, a circumstance which might induce us to believe him Saul's eldest son. He was not a man of much vigour of mind; like other weak men, he was prone to suspicion and ready for a quarrel. He was satisfied to wear a crown, and to enjoy the pleasures of a throne, while another thought and acted for him. But he was held in little esteem by his subjects, who changed his name Ishbaal, 'Lordly man,' into Ishbosheth, 'Man of shame' (bashful); by the latter he is known in history. He was only a king in name. The tribes on the west bank of the Jordan either stood in awe of the Philistines, or were unwilling to receive him among them; for he chose

Mahanaim, a city on the fertile plain of Gad, as his capital. That region had good cause to be grateful to the house of Saul. But, had it not been for Abner's influence and David's unhappy alliance with the heathen, Ishbosheth would never have been thought of for the kingdom.

David seems to have kept up friendly relations with Achish during his stay in Hebron; he was then a tributary of the Philistines. Ishbosheth, on the other hand, was at war with these trampers on his country. The position of his capital city and the wrongs of his house preclude the idea that he would wear a crown as their vassal. But at that time neither David nor his rival enjoyed the confidence of the Hebrews. They were merely the chiefs of two parties at feud, on whose purposeless strife the nation looked without interest. In the first place, Ishbosheth reigned only two years in Mahanaim, while David reigned seven and a half in Hebron. Assuming that they began to reign at nearly the same time, there was thus a period of five years and a half, during which no king ruled the eleven tribes, and no desire was manifested to unite with the kingdom of Judah. These years of waiting were spent in bringing round Israel again to place confidence in David. But, further, the Hebrews regarded the quarrel of Ishbosheth and David as a matter of small concern. Perhaps they had no longer the same desire as of old for a king; or they may have had little confidence in either of the two princes. Whatever the reason of it may have been, the indifference of the people is unquestionable. Only one battle was fought between the two parties in seven years. If not the only battle fought, it was at least the only one deemed worth recording. And it was more like a faction fight between two petty clans than a battle between two kingdoms. It was fought under the following circumstances:—An agreement appears to have been entered into between the chiefs of the two parties to appeal to arms; but, with the view of avoiding bloodshed, twelve champions were chosen on each side, by

whose prowess the quarrel should be settled. Gibeon, the common sanctuary of both, was fixed on for the fight. Accordingly, Joab met Abner at the large water tank, near the foot of the hill on which the town was built. Each of them was accompanied by a band of soldiers. They were separated by the long broad tank. When everything was ready, Abner called across to Joab, 'Let the young men now stand forth and play before us.' 'Let them stand forth,' was the reply. The champions from each side at once marched into the space between the two bands. The battle was over in a few minutes. The warlike play which the captains called for was not decisive. Animated by hatred of their rivals, and upholding the honour of their tribe, each of them, selecting an opponent, gave and received a mortal thrust. The ghastly sight of twenty-four strong men, stretched in a moment bleeding and dead on the ground, awoke in the onlookers a thirst for blood. A fierce battle between the two bands at once began. Abner's men gave way before the onset of the well-trained soldiers of Joab. Broken and scattered, they fled along the pasture grounds known as Midbar-Gibeon. Abner, like the others, sought safety in flight, running for some distance alone, but keeping the rest of his force in sight. Both he and they were making for a hill on which they could rally. But there was a youthful pursuer behind the chief. As the latter cast a look now and again over his shoulder, he saw the space between them gradually growing less. The pursuer passed others of the fugitives without turning aside. He was bent on making up with Abner. And he gained his wish. 'Is this thou, Asahel?' asked the fugitive, as he recognised Joab's youngest brother. 'It is,' he answers, the fewness of his words showing the eagerness of his purpose. 'Turn for thy good,' added Abner; 'lay hold on one of the young men, and take thou his armour.' But the rash youth gave no heed to this advice. With sword uplifted and ready to strike, he pushed heedlessly forward. Abner

saw there was no danger so long as Asahel was behind the long and powerful spear which he was carrying by the middle. 'Turn aside for thy good,' Abner repeated; 'wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?' But these appeals were thrown away. A few strides more, and the sword of Asahel would have smitten Abner. But he was on his guard. Taking careful aim, he delivered a back thrust with his heavy spear at the unwary pursuer. The pointed end was shod with iron, for the purpose of catching firm hold of the ground when the warrior encamped for the night. Asahel was regardless of this iron end. It was on him, it was forced past his uplifted arm, and through his flank before he was aware. Turning round to withdraw the spear, Abner stood for a little over the fallen runner. The shadow of death was already resting on his features, and in his looks Abner read a blood feud between himself and the two brothers of the slain hero.

The fall of Asahel stopped the pursuit. On coming up to the dying soldier, the men of Judah stood still, awed, as it were, by the greatness of the disaster. Drawn to the place by the crowd, Joab and Abishai discovered their loss. They marked the spot in which the spear pierced their brother's side, to pay the slayer like for like at a future day. A passionate desire for vengeance seized them. The chase was resumed. But the respite gained by the fall of Asahel gave Abner time to gather his followers on the top of a hill called Ammah, near the border of Midbar-Gibeon. Joab and his men reached the foot of it towards sunset. They appear to have formed in a long line in the hope of outflanking those on the top. But the voice of Abner calling out: 'Shall the sword devour for ever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?' warned Joab not to be too eager. Unwilling to confess that the position of the beaten army was too strong for him, Joab, pretending a desire to save the shedding of blood, answered that his men would not

have withdrawn from the attack and pursuit till daybreak had Abner not spoken. The trumpet called a halt to the assailants. Retiring from the hill, they turned their faces homewards. Both the Hebrew chiefs marched all night, the one to Mahanaim, along the banks of Jordan; the other to Hebron, the distance in each case being under thirty miles. The dead body of Asahel was carried to Bethlehem, and laid in his father's tomb.

In the war between the two kings, all other forays and fights which took place were thought unworthy of mention by the sacred writer. Passing them over with the brief remark, 'There was long war between the houses of David and Saul,' he goes on to show how the former increased in greatness, while the latter fell from causes unconnected with the war. David was becoming known to the petty kings of Palestine. Talmi, whose kingdom of Geshur lay not far from Damascus, gave him his daughter Maachah in marriage, though he was well aware she would be but one of a large band of wives dwelling in the palace. This prince was probably a member of the Hittite confederacy of kings who, when guided by a skilful chief, were able to defy Assyria on the east and Egypt on the south. But these numerous marriages are one of the greatest blots on David's good name. It may have been otherwise in those days, for when the sacred writer speaks of him as 'going on and growing stronger,' the first proof given is the number of sons born to him by his wives. But a man so enlightened as David must have felt that he was stretching the mere permission of the divine law to breaking point, when he gave himself up through passion or pride to this savage morality. Knowing that it was not so from the beginning, knowing, too, that his people, if not forbidden in the law to have more wives than one, were at least discouraged from this custom of the heathen, he put a stumblingblock before the well-disposed, and he gave the enemies of Jehovah cause to



blaspheme. The blots which stained his kingly greatness, the griefs which cankered his happiness when all things seemed going well with him, and the terrible blows which fell on his house, took their birth in this multitude of wives.

The pride of Abner, to which Ishbosheth owed his throne, proved also the cause of his own death and of the overthrow of Saul's house. The king, lending a willing ear to the scandal of servants regarding visits paid by Abner to the women's apartments, resented an insult which Eastern despots consider the most heinous that can be cast on their greatness. But he was afraid to do more than charge his minister with guilt. A storm of anger burst from Abner on hearing the accusation. The helpless prince was struck with terror. He could neither speak nor act when Abner, reproaching him with his baseness, threatened to undo all he had done by handing the kingdom over to David, its rightful sovereign. If Ishbosheth was a mean man, unworthy to reign, Abner showed himself to be a haughty aspirant to the office of king-maker, who might, if he pleased, make David king. When it suited his own end, Abner proposed to carry Jehovah's purposes into effect. He believed himself necessary for their fulfilment. Pride went before a fall; the boaster was doomed to shame. It is not likely that he set about executing his threat openly, and with the knowledge of Ishbosheth. The first step he took was to send trusty messengers to Hebron. On arriving, they had an interview with David, at which they asked him, 'Whose is the land?' They discovered that he regarded Abner as the real ruler of Israel. Before the nation could again be brought under the sway of one prince, it was clearly his opinion that an engagement must be entered into with that chief. Emboldened by this discovery, they opened out their master's message more fully: 'Make thy league with me, and behold my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.' A meeting was also proposed between David and Abner, at which

arrangements could be made for settling the business. David willingly agreed to this arrangement, if his wife Michal were first restored to him by Abner. The messengers reported this condition to their master. He was ready enough to comply; but, as he wished things to be managed quietly at first, he seems to have sent other messengers, requesting David himself to demand Michal from Ishbosheth.

In the meantime Abner was busy preparing for a revolution. He represented to princes and elders the hopelessness of struggling with the Philistines so long as Ishbosheth was on the throne. He reminded them of their desire after Saul's death to have David for king, and of the assurance given long before that David was chosen to deliver Israel from all enemies. But he dealt most earnestly with the chiefs of Benjamin in favour of a new order of things. With them his word carried most weight, and to them a change of allegiance would bring the greatest loss. When affairs had thus been managed so far well for the intended change, messengers arrived from David demanding back his wife Michal. Abner gave his voice in favour of yielding. He did more; he undertook to escort her to Hebron himself, though his real object was to make David aware of the revolt, which was swiftly coming to a head. Twenty men accompanied him to Hebron; an insufficient guard through a hostile country, had not David's messengers gone back with them. Knowing when they would reach Hebron, or forewarned that they were already on the road, David despatched Joab with a band of soldiers against some raiders who had plundered the south of Judah. He did not intend to make him aware of what was on foot. Abner was received with open arms at Hebron. A great feast, at which he was entertained in the place of honour, proclaimed to the city the approaching end of civil war. But tidings of Joab's return hastened the close of these rejoicings. Without delay Abner was hurried off to collect the tribes of Israel for the purpose of making David

king. Scarcely had he left the city for the north, when Joab entered with much spoil from the south. The coming of Abner was soon made known to him, not with any evil design, but only as the gossip of the town. Given to trickery and deceit himself, he could not believe that the only reason for his coming was to restore Michal to her husband. Furious also at the king for concealing the matter from him, Joab hastened to the palace, and with a scorning which showed the mastery he had already acquired over David, he demanded an explanation of this sending away of Abner. His only object in coming, he said, was to spy out the land. Unhappily, Joab was to David almost as imperious and as useful as was Abner to Ishbosheth. On leaving the palace, Joab sent messengers to recall Abner to Hebron; perhaps some of the very men who had gone to Mahanaim for Michal, and whom Abner knew. Joab's audacity would not shrink from giving the order as if it came from the king. Nor would the messengers sent suspect evil. Abner was only a little way from the city. Fearing no danger, he turned on receiving the message. Joab is appeased, he thought; the king has bought up the blood feud, or the two brothers are as wishful of peace as David himself. When he drew near to the city gate, Joab and Abishai met him and his men. There were no signs of danger. Everything boded peace. Kindly greetings passed between the rival chiefs. Joab then turned Abner aside towards the middle of the gate to a retired spot where they could talk over matters in private. He was not allowed to enter the city of refuge. Abner, having no fear, followed the two brothers, leaving his own men to wait his return. He was snared in the toils. Suddenly turning on him, Joab threw off the mask of friendship, and stabbed him in the very part where his spear had given Asahel the death-wound.

Tidings of the treacherous murder soon spread to the palace. With horror at the deed, David hastened to clear

himself from guilt. Almost every man in the eleven tribes, on hearing of it, would suspect the king's hand, as well as Joab's. Every one knew that the death of Abner removed the mainstay of Ishbosheth's throne; but only a few could be aware of his real design in visiting Hebron. The deed would seem black in the eyes of men at a distance. They would hear of the friendly visit, the bringing back of Michal, and the message of recall. Alarmed at the appearance things might wear, David hastened to make his innocence known to his own people, as well as to Abner's. While invoking the vengeance of heaven on the murderers, he issued orders to his courtiers and soldiers, and especially to Joab, to rend their garments, to clothe themselves with sackcloth, and to follow the bier on which Abner was borne to the grave. David himself headed the procession. And as the loud wail of grief arose from the mourners, the king also wept aloud. And well might he weep, for the murder of Abner awoke suspicions which were not easily allayed. David gave further proof of his grief for the death of Abner by composing a brief but beautiful elegy on his mournful end. In substance it was as follows:—

As dies the fool, did Abner die?  
 Thy hands, they were not bound,  
 And brazen bands did not thy feet surround.  
 Not so,—as brave men falling die  
 Before the wicked, so did Abner falling lie.

A general fast for the remainder of the day was the third token of David's sorrow. But he was unable to do more to the murderer than deprive him of the office of commander-in-chief. The blood feud between Joab and Abner gave a colour of right to the crime, which Joab could plead in his own defence (Num. xxxv. 26, 27). For five years, if not for a longer period, David's unscrupulous nephew was in disgrace. From the day on which he delivered that fatal sword-thrust, to that other day on which he carried the stronghold of Zion at the head of his men, he ceased to hold the highest place

among the soldiers of Judah. But the king was not able to go farther. At a meeting of those whom he could trust, David, in view of all the difficulties of his position, was forced to say: 'I am this day weak though an anointed king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are stronger than I.'

The murder of Abner was followed by another as base at Mahanaim. Among the captains of Ishbosheth were two brothers, named Baanah and Rechab, who, though natives of Beeroth, one of the heathen cities spared by Joshua, were, with their fellow-citizens, reckoned members of Saul's own tribe. One of their townsmen, Naharai, was armour-bearer to Joab, and a chief man in the army of Judah. If they were aware of this, the hope of similar, or even greater honours, may have had no small influence in determining their course of action. At noon on a hot summer day, when Ishbosheth was taking a mid-day sleep, they entered the palace, getting past the guards on pretence of fetching wheat from the king's stores.<sup>1</sup> Gliding into the chamber, they stabbed him to the heart as he lay on his bed. To ensure a speedy reward by convincing David of the service they had done, they cut off their master's head, they hid it in the bag of wheat, and made their escape from the palace. Hurrying towards the Jordan, they travel all night down the dreary Arabah, cheered by the hope of being numbered among David's chiefest favourites. Bitterly were they disappointed. Next morning they reach the capital of Judah; like the Amalekite who brought the news of Saul's death, they have tidings for the king and for him alone. They are admitted to an audience. After recounting to David their tale of blood, they draw forth from the wheat-bag the head of his murdered rival, ghastly, covered with blood, and blood-stained grains of wheat. It

<sup>1</sup> Instead of this, the LXX. have: 'And the portress of the palace was cleaning wheat, and was nodding and sleeping, and Rechab and Baanah escaped notice' (2 Sam. iv. 6). Such translating as this is sometimes preferred to the Hebrew version! See also their verse 7.

was a horrid present. But the murderers hoped to make David a partner in their guilt, for one of them, holding up the head, exclaimed: 'Jehovah hath given to my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and his seed.' The great heart of David swelled with rage at this wickedness. It was not worldly policy only, not a cunning stroke to turn aside suspicion from himself. A noble nature awoke within him at the sight of the blood-stained head, and the effrontery of murderers almost asking him to become a sharer in their guilt. Orders were at once issued to some of the guard standing round to put the men to death. And that there might be no doubt of their fate, or of the reason why they suffered, their hands and feet were cut off and suspended on poles beside the great tank, to which the people of Hebron repaired for water. These instruments of the murder and the flight were left swinging on poles for some time. According to the law, bodies could not remain exposed after sundown. The putting up of the hands and feet was thus a politic evasion of the Mosaic law. The head of Ishbosheth was buried in the tomb of Abner. But all the precautions taken by David did not prevent his enemies from fastening on him the charge of a guilty complicity in the murders of Abner and Ishbosheth. Nearly twenty years after the overthrow of Saul's dynasty, that feeling probably found expression in the invectives hurled at David by Shimei, the Benjamite. 'Thou man of blood,' 'Thou man of Belial,' shedder of 'all the blood of the house of Saul,' were some of the charges uttered against the king, when his power to punish appeared to have passed away altogether.

Although the anointing of David as king of All-Israel follows close on the death of his rival in the written record, there was really an interval of five years. No account has been preserved of the means taken for winning over the eleven tribes to David, or of the chiefs by whom that was managed. But judging from the lists of armed men sent 'to

turn the kingdom of Saul to David,' it is plain that the priests had a leading hand in the change. Their prince, Jehoiada, and their brave captain, Zadok, are the only men named on these lists. From this circumstance, as well as from the horror with which the whole priestly caste would naturally regard the house of Saul, we may reasonably conclude that these two took the lead in bringing the eleven tribes to acknowledge David as king. At a later period, after the rebellion of Absalom, the high priests, Zadok and Abiathar, persuaded the men of Judah to invite David back to Jerusalem. From all parts of the land came Israel in thousands to set the crown on David's head. Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, the tribes nearest to Hebron, sent but a small number of representatives to this general assembly. From Issachar came only two hundred chief men. But the other tribes sent armies varying in number from eighteen to fifty thousand. The tribes on the east of Jordan, which furnished only 40,000 men for the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, were now able to send 120,000 to Hebron. Peace and union had increased their prosperity after Saul saved them from ruin. They now repaid their debt to the rest of Israel. Altogether, nearly 340,000 men were under arms in and around Hebron in honour of the new king. 'Thy bone and thy flesh are we,' were the terms in which these free-born Israelites made their submission to David. They were his brethren, not his slaves. Perhaps a greater number of unarmed men, of women, and of children, were lookers-on. For three days the rejoicings and feastings continued. Strings of camels, asses, and oxen brought dried fruits, wines, olive oil, and bread from a district of country stretching at least seventy miles to the north of Hebron, while flocks of sheep and oxen from the south country furnished the vast assembly with animal food during their stay at the town.

Before the soldiers returned home, David turned their enthusiasm to account by proposing to capture the stronghold

of Jebus.<sup>1</sup> Although formerly in possession of the Hebrews, it had been retaken by the heathen. But David had remarked its natural strength, and its fitness for becoming the capital of a kingdom. Having often passed the Hill of Zion, having lived within a few miles of it for most of his life, and knowing thoroughly the sacred traditions which had gathered round the neighbourhood, he was led to desire it for a metropolis. It was one of the strongest places in the country; art might make it impregnable. From it also he could fall back on his own tribe of Judah should disaffection break out in the north. It was, besides, a centre from which he could most easily guide the course of war against the Philistine, the Edomite, the Ammonite, and the Moabite. Although not the natural centre of the country, Zion was the centre of the district within which had been wrought out the life and history of the twelve tribes. The great events of patriarchal times, nearly all the battles of the conquest under Joshua, and most of the wars in the times of the Judges, were grouped round Jerusalem. A circle of thirty miles radius, with that town for a centre, embraced almost every enemy and almost every achievement in Hebrew annals. Poetry, piety, and policy combined to make it a fitting metropolis for the new kingdom.

When David summoned the garrison to surrender, his demand was treated with contempt. They told him the blind and the lame could hold the fortress against all his efforts. The Israelites themselves came to entertain a similar opinion of it: 'The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem' (Lam. iv. 12). But if the confidence of the Jebusites was great, David's determination was greater. His name and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. v. 6: 'The king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the *Jebusite inhabiting the land*.' The words in italics are unintelligible, except they be a quotation of a well-known phrase from the Pentateuch and Joshua.



throne were pledged to success. A failure would break the spell gathering soldiers round him; success would bind the people closer to their sovereign and to each other. Impressed with a deep sense of the greatness of the crisis, David issued a proclamation,<sup>1</sup> assuring to the first who should gain the wall in the forthcoming assault, the office of commander-in-chief. It was discovered that the only pathway up the rugged sides of Zion was by a watercourse leading down to the valley two or three hundred feet below. Great changes have been made on the ground since that time. As Joab himself might fail to recognise it could he return to the scene of his exploit, modern inquirers are not justified in attempting to determine his exact path up the rocks. Perhaps the danger of an assault at any other point was too great to be risked. But the watercourse, being deemed secure against an enemy from its steepness, may have been left unguarded, an omission far from uncommon in ancient sieges. If so, the besieged had reason to repent of the oversight. Favoured by the darkness of the night, or in the dim light of the early morning, Joab effected a lodgment on the wall by climbing up the watercourse. Only a small force could follow him on this rugged path. The stronghold was soon in the hands of the Hebrew troops; and Joab regained by his daring the post which he forfeited some years before by the murder of Abner. There seem to have been two fortresses taken, 'a stronghold of Zion,' as the Hebrew reads (2 Sam. v. 7), and Zion itself. One was a castle, the other was the town. Apparently they correspond to the northern and southern ends of the hill of Zion, the northern and smaller height being separated from the higher and larger by a narrow neck of land. We are not

<sup>1</sup> The substance only of the proclamation is given in 1 Chron. xi. 6; the words are given in 2 Sam. v. 8, but the sentence is not complete, which may be owing to the carelessness of some ancient transcriber, but is more probably due to the Hebrews not having a word for *et cetera*. 'Whosoever smiting the Jebusite reacheth by the watercourse both the lame and the blind, the hated of David's soul,' etc.

told the fate of the vanquished. But as the heights of Moriah, between Zion and the Mount of Olives, were in possession of a Jebusite thirty years after this time, and David, when wishful to secure the hill as a site for the temple, paid the full price for it, the vanquished were evidently treated with a kindness uncommon in ancient warfare.

Zion, or 'the Sunny,' was a hill of about sixty acres in extent on the top, and rose at its highest point 2520 feet above the sea. Its length lay north and south. At its north end a narrow saddle, fifty yards across, connected it with a smaller and a slightly lower hill called Acra. But on every other side it was defended by ravines or sharply sloping ground, descending to valley bottoms more than one hundred and in some places more than three hundred feet below. Across the valley to the east of Zion was another hill, parallel to Zion, somewhat lower, and less fitted at that time for building on. Moriah, as this hill was called, sloped rapidly towards the south for about half a mile. Its narrow, southern tongue, or part of it, is believed to have been the Ophel of David's time, and perhaps the site of Solomon's palace, while its centre, higher, broader, and perhaps longer, became the site of the temple. Still farther to the east, and separated from Moriah by the deep cleft of the Kedron or Blackwater, was the triple-topped mountain called Olivet, higher than Moriah and Zion, of much greater area, but less defensible in war. The valleys or ravines, parting these hills from one another and from the country on the west of Zion, all met about three hundred yards beyond the famous pool of Siloam, at the south-western end of Moriah. This meeting-point is 460 feet lower than its summit, and 100 feet below its southern end.

As central Moriah is known to have been used for a threshing-floor till near the end of David's reign, it cannot have been the fortress which he took from the heathen. Mount Olivet is also excluded by universal consent. There

seem to remain only two hills which could have justified the boasts of the enemy, Zion and Acra. The former is generally regarded as the place. But by several writers both heights are made to play a part in the story. Acra is believed to have been, what it certainly became many centuries afterwards, a strong castle, which David took before he carried the stronger fortress of Zion. As the two hills may then have passed under the one name of Zion, the theory may possibly be correct. But changes have taken place since that time by lowering the high ground and filling up hollows or valleys, which render a verdict on these points of comparatively little value.

Recently, however, an attempt has been made to revive a different theory. Dr. Birch, followed by several others, has identified Zion with Ophel, or the southern tongue of Moriah.<sup>1</sup> David's palace and David's city thus become the same thing. The ground on which it was built could not have exceeded twenty acres, if even so much space was available. As a fortress, the Ophel slope would be of little worth. At a distance of a hundred yards, it was completely commanded by the higher ground up the hill. Besides, on this view David's capital was only as large as a good-sized castle; the stories given of crowds of soldiers, priests, Levites, and citizens thronging its streets, can be nothing better than romantic inventions of a later age. Were it not for the support which some details of the theory seem to derive from the writings of Nehemiah, it would not be looked at. The names Zion and City of David are applied sometimes to the whole of Jerusalem, and sometimes to a part of it, but usually in a way sufficient to puzzle those who are wedded to a theory. If Zion was a town or castle built by David on the narrow tongue of Moriah, the description of it in the Psalms is most misleading. 'On the sides of the north' (P's. xlviii. 2) con-

<sup>1</sup> Birch, *Pal. Exp. Q. S.*, Jan. 1882. Wellhausen's view is the same, and is advocated in *Encyc. Brit.* xiii. 639 a. See also Lewin, *Sketch of Jerusalem*.

veys no meaning whatever if the southern slope of Ophel was in the writer's thoughts. To Zion and Acra, again, the words were strictly applicable, as the general slope of the ground there was towards the north.

The fame of David soon spread beyond Palestine. But his neighbours, the Philistines, were the first to take alarm. A union of the twelve tribes under one king boded evil to them. Although David might be content to remain their tributary so long as he reigned over Judah only in Hebron, he would endeavour to throw off their yoke as soon as he became king of the whole country in Jerusalem. But while they were preparing for war with David, Hiram, king of Tyre, was seeking his friendship. A sincere peace could not exist between the Tyrians and the Philistines. Living on the same seaboard, and, in the period of the Philistines' greatest power, having almost the same border at Dor, there must have been rivalry, if not war, between them. A common enemy thus became the bond of union, at first perhaps, between David and Hiram. The independence of the one would be a guarantee for that of the other, and the fortifying of Jerusalem may have seemed to Hiram an effectual means of fortifying Tyre. Accordingly, his messengers to David were followed by a body of carpenters and masons to assist in building the walls of the new capital. Cedar-wood also was sent from Lebanon for the beautifying of David's own palace. But before the City of David, as the town was then called, became entitled to rank as the chief stronghold of Palestine, the Philistine armies came to seek the new king. Spreading over the fertile plain of Rephaim, in the neighbourhood of Zion, they plundered the open country. On hearing of their approach, David went down for safety to a place called the 'Hold,' which it is difficult to avoid identifying with Adullam. Bethlehem was seized by the invaders, who even threw a garrison into the town. Sick at heart, David appears to have also fallen sick in body. A longing came over him such as

men often feel when illness has struck them down, and a fancy takes possession of them for something they used to get but can get no longer: 'Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!' It was harvest time, the hot season of the year. Three of his Mighties had come down from the highlands to consult with their stricken chief. They heard his prayer. Without delay they fell on the enemy, broke their array, and returned with a skin of water from the gate well of Bethlehem. An achievement so brilliant brought back life to the sick man more than the water he prayed for. Pouring it out on the ground as a drink-offering, 'Forbid, O Lord,' he said, 'that I should do this. Is it not the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?' The longing for the water had passed away: 'he desired not to drink' their blood. An incident like this shows the power exercised by David over the men who gathered round him. Probably it roused him to action. But before hazarding an attack, he inquired, through the high priest, whether Jehovah would give him success. 'Go up,' said the high priest, 'for I will certainly deliver the Philistines into thine hand.' Whether David suddenly fell on their camp with his six hundred, or engaged them in a pitched battle, is uncertain. The scene of the fight was the high grounds afterwards called Baal Perazim, in memory of their discomfiture. Their defeat was as thorough as when the side of a water tank, giving way, allows the hurrying waters to rush forth over the neighbouring valley. In their headlong retreat they left behind them the wooden images which they carried with the army. The sacred writer records the contempt of the victor for these vanities—he carried them off and burned them in the fire.

This display of force on David's part, far from terrifying the Philistines, determined them to make a greater effort to seize the new king. Again they spread themselves over the plain of Rephaim, as if defying him to repeat the blow which

he had already delivered. They were more watchful and in greater numbers. An attack in front and a pitched battle were forbidden: 'Thou shalt not go up: fetch a compass to their rear, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.' The plan of attack took David towards the great north road, probably to the valley of Baca (Ps. lxxxiv. 6). The Hebrews forbore to move till their king heard the sign of victory, the 'sound of a going' in the tree-tops, intimating that Jehovah had gone before him to the battle. This sound of a going may have been caused by the morning wind touching the tree-tops with its first soft breathings, or by some other cause equally natural. But the sound, foretold and waited for, encouraged the Hebrew soldiers, even while it filled them with awe, especially if its solemn murmur were heard amid the deep stillness of earliest morning. Complete success crowned the attack. The final stand of the enemy was made between Gibeon and Geba, on the southern bank of the ravine which witnessed their ruinous defeat in the first war of independence. From that town they were driven westward down the pass of Beth-horon, as far as Gezer, a stronghold on the southern border of the plain of Sharon. In that second war of independence the power of the Philistines was broken. The sceptre of Israel, which they had wielded for generations, was wrested for ever from their grasp.

David showed his gratitude to Jehovah for thus delivering the kingdom from bondage, by proposing to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim to Zion. The time chosen was probably the feast of passover or of tabernacles, as All-Israel, from the river of Egypt in the south to the pass of Hamath in the north, assembled for the purpose. Priests, Levites, prophets, and soldiers were present in vast numbers; but to so low an ebb had the study of sacred learning fallen among the twelve tribes, that none of those in power seem to have known the only allowable way of removing the ark from place to place. Seventy years before, it came from the Philistines'

country on a new cart, drawn by two milch kine unbroken to the yoke. Traditions of that coming were rife in the neighbourhood; what better plan of taking it away could be devised? Accordingly a new cart was prepared, oxen were got to draw it, and Uzzah and Ahio, the two sons or descendants of Abinadab, in whose house the ark lay, were appointed over the oxen. A great host of harpers, musicians, priests, and soldiers accompanied the cart. All went well till they reached a place called Nachon's or Chidon's threshing-floor. For some reason the oxen stumbled and became restive. Afraid of the ark rolling off, Uzzah, who was walking behind, tried to steady it with his hand. It was a rash act. No one but the priests was allowed to handle that sacred symbol of God's presence, and even they could only put their hands to the carrying staves provided for the purpose. 'The sons of Kohath shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die,' was the law and the penalty (Num. iv. 15). In sight of all the people, Uzzah was struck dead beside the ark. Swiftly as the rumour of his sad end ran among the assembled thousands, as swiftly would course after it the remembrance of the multitude who perished at Bethshemesh seventy years before for looking on the ark. The rejoicings of the day were turned into mourning, its glad-some praise into the silence of a terrible dread. Even David was afraid. He was not aware of any wrong for which Uzzah had paid so heavy a penalty. And in the midst of most sincere endeavours to honour Jehovah, this terrible blow dashes his hopes and plans to the ground. 'How,' he said, 'shall the ark of God come to me?' In the terror wrought by the untoward doom of Uzzah, he had the ark placed in the house of a Levite named Obed-edom, belonging to the town of Gath Rimmon, hard by.

A few weeks sufficed to discover the true cause of this failure. Uzzah committed an 'error'—a word not used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. He was a victim of the sin of others in their long neglect of the ark. The fallings away of

former generations brought down punishment on his head. But the writer in Samuel does not stay the narrative to give his readers an insight into the nature of that error. He did not need. At the beginning of his book he described, in the professional language of the priests, the proper way of carrying the ark, and he indicates it twice here and twice also after David discovered the mistake committed.<sup>1</sup> But the Chronicler records the ignorance of the priests in allowing the ark to be placed on a cart, their violation of the Mosaic law, their neglect in not using the carrying staves, and the sin of touching the ark, precisely as might be expected from one to whom the law of Moses was familiar. These two writers were separated by an interval of more than five hundred years. Events, which took place during that interval, explain the comparative silence of the one and the free speaking of the other; and in this view of the matter there is one thing left out which it is advisable to bear in mind. The writer of the books of Samuel had not the same reason to refer to the law of Moses as the writer of the books of Chronicles. While the writer in Samuel regarded the Mosaic law as a national heirloom familiar to all, the Chronicler had been taught by persecution and by national captivity to regard it also as the test of happiness or misery to the Hebrews. Exile, famine, sword, unheard-of privations, had stamped it so deeply on the mind of the one that his whole heart was full of it to the exclusion of other things, while the older writer had not had like experience of the same horrors and calamities flowing from its neglect. The one lived at a time when the sun of the Hebrew faith and power shone with its greatest splendour;

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 255. The repetition in 2 Sam. vi. 3, 4 is often ascribed to the blundering of a transcriber. It seems rather an emphatic calling of attention to the error committed, 'They set the ark of God on a new cart (for they bore it out of the house of Abinadab that was on the hill), and Uzzah and Ahio drave the new cart (for they bore it out of the house of Abinadab that was on the hill) with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark.' See similar repetitions, 2 Sam. iv. 5-7; xxiv. 21, 25; 1 Kings vi. 9, 14.



the other when that sun seemed sunk in the shades of night. With good reason, therefore, does the writer of the Chronicles look on the law of Moses as the only means of bringing back light and glory to the nation. He feels a terrible want; the law may supply that want to him and his people. The writer of the books of Samuel did not feel the same want of national life and glory. A bright day of prosperity was shining on him and his readers. It would therefore have been contrary to nature had he and the writer of the books of Chronicles written in like terms of the law of Moses. It must also be allowed that the law was not carefully studied in the end of Saul's reign and for the first seven years of David's. The slaughter of the priests of Nob, more than anything else, caused a break in the continuity of sacred customs which, though fully preserved in writing, acquired additional force by passing from mouth to mouth as the ages rolled on. The murder of the high priest, and of the most trusted officials about the holy place, left a gap between the past and the future which Abiathar, the only survivor of the priests of Nob, may not have been able to bridge across. The wandering life, which he led after his escape from Saul, was not fitted for gathering again together the scattered threads of that broken cord. With all justice, then, might we look for ignorance of the law of Moses at this period of David's history, and for blundering in the minute details of sacred things. Twenty years' intermission of study or practice will, in most cases, efface from the memory the less outstanding details of a man's professional knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

The discovery of the error committed in setting the ark on a cart, and the blessings bestowed on Obed-edom, emboldened

<sup>1</sup> Within the past five years, a singular illustration of these views happened in the church history of Europe. It is well known that the smoke arising from the burning of the voting papers is a signal to the watchers on the piazza of St Peter's, that the cardinals, to whom belongs the duty of filling up a vacancy in the popedom, have failed to elect a new pope. At the last election in 1878, two burnings of the papers, on February 18 and 19, indicated two

the king to a renewal of the enterprise. A tent was pitched in Zion, similar to the Mosaic tabernacle; or rather a large uncovered court was curtained off, and within it a wooden house, richly ornamented, was built for the ark of God. When the procession of priests, Levites, and people entered the city, David was with them, clothed in a robe of fine linen similar to that worn by the sons of Aaron. As they climbed the steep and narrow streets, the outpoured blood of a host of victims, slain before the advancing ark, sought reconciliation with God. When six paces had been stepped by the bearers,—the professional word is now used,—oxen and fatlings fell beneath the sacrificial knife. Evidently the way to the holy place was a way of blood. The stained streets of Zion, the rivers of blood, the slaughtered heaps, and the blaze of altar fires formed a strange contrast to the dancing, the singing, and the harping of the multitudes who crowded the city. It may not have seemed wonderful to them. Custom, which familiarizes the eye to the strangest sights, if they do not outrage conscience, had led them to consider blood and death two of the essential elements of worship. But no one now can think of the blood-stained way, along which the ark of mercy was borne, without seeing in these red rivers the foreshadowing of a hidden power in blood to cleanse what it touched, altogether unlike its power to defile.

As the ark passed along the streets, David showed his joy by engaging before it in a kind of sacred dance. Among the Hebrews sacred dances are sometimes mentioned, especially in the book of Psalms, as acts of divine worship. But they were not common in David's time. Like other ancient customs, the dance had fallen into decay during the troublous age which preceded. But the revived study of ancient

failures. On the following morning the smoke was again seen, but an election had been made. 'This third burning of the papers seems to have been a mistake; perhaps the lapse of thirty-one years [the reign of Pius IX.] had sufficed to cause some important points of the traditional routine to be forgotten.'—*Edinburgh Review*, No. 316, p. 438.

literature appears to have taught David the lawfulness of the practice. As Miriam, in the hour of Israel's triumph over Pharaoh, led the Hebrew women when, with 'timbrels and dances,' they replied to Moses' song of thanks, so it was not unbecoming in David to join in the sacred song and in the sacred dance, in commemoration of an event which, considering the overthrow of the Philistines that preceded, seemed not unlike another triumphant marching forth from bondage. To complete the parallel, David, following the example of Moses, handed to Asaph, the leader of the song, a hymn of praise similar to that composed on the overthrow of the Egyptians.<sup>1</sup>

But all the Hebrews did not share in the pious fervour of their king. Some of them, unread in the holy books, and with little warmth of heart, despised him for this display of feeling. Among these was his wife Michal. From a window of the palace she saw the part he took in the rejoicings. With the same boldness of speech which characterized her in the first years of their married life, she welcomed him on his return to the palace with words of bitter scorn. Several hours had elapsed, giving her time to reflect on her speech of welcome. The ark had been lodged within the tabernacle; bread and raisin-cake and wine distributed to the multitude, and the final sacrifices offered. Before David can bless his own house, as a fitting close to the solemnities of the day, Michal comes forth to meet him. Wives, concubines, children, servants are assembled in the court of the palace to receive the blessing of their lord. But Michal mars the happiness of the meeting by likening him to one of the 'vain fellows,' the worthless men who were found in Zion as they

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xvi. 7-36. This hymn now exists in the Psalter as Ps. cv. 1-15, the whole of Ps. xvi., besides 2 Chron. v. 13, and Ps. cvi. 47, 48. No one with the Psalter in his hands would have joined two psalms together in this fashion, unless he had authority to do so from the history he was consulting. Still less would he have made changes on the words. The Chronicler has evidently preserved the first version of the hymn, and we know from Psalm xviii. and 2 Sam. xxii. that David did publish two editions of a poem.

are found in all towns. 'Raca' is the name with which she scorns her king and husband—Raca, that word which the mouth utters when the heart is breaking the sixth commandment. And it was uttered, too, in presence of the women who, like her, had come forth to meet David. It may have been a stroke of policy on Michal's part, an attempt to intimidate her many rivals in the palace, and to cast once more round David the chains of a submission which he may have worn in former years. If so, it was a fatal blunder. David at once deposed her from the office of queen, a place to which both her rank and the fact that she was his first wife may have entitled her. But he also condemned her to banishment from his presence. Perhaps, indeed, she was imprisoned for life in some corner of the palace, where there might be but one or two handmaidens to wait on her, and to hear her freely-expressed contempt for the man whose life she saved at the risk of her own, and whose honour she valued more than her place as his wife and queen.

When David sat in his own house, admiring the white stones and the polished cedar work which skilled workmen from Tyre had prepared for him, he became alarmed lest, in lodging himself so splendidly, he had forgotten what was due to the Giver of all honour. 'I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains,' he said to Nathan the prophet, one of his chief counsellors. And then he detailed to him the plan of building a gorgeous temple for the ark. Nathan encouraged him in his purpose. But the prophet's advice was given without warrant from Heaven. That very night he was commanded to forbid the warrior king to build a temple. The honour was reserved for a son not yet born, who should rule the land in peace. But in return for the desire which he felt to honour God, the promise was given him of an endless line of princes, who should succeed him in the kingdom. The message of Nathan and the prayer of David (2 Sam. vii. 1-29) are frequently referred to in the

history which follows, while they are themselves allowed to be distinct echoes of the Pentateuch as the foundation of Hebrew thought and worship. This interweaving of the present with the past and the future is an irrefragable proof of the writer's truthfulness. The practice also of quoting himself as well as others, is a peculiarity of style which has not met with the attention it deserves. But though David was forbidden to build a temple, he was inspired to write the hymns for use in its worship. Before the necessity for these new songs of praise was felt, David had distinguished himself as much by depth of feeling and sweetness of song in poetry, as by skill in arms. His 'Dumb-dove-among-strangers,'<sup>1</sup> and the sacred songs which he wrote 'in the wilderness and in the cave' during his banishment from court,<sup>2</sup> show a passion and a tenderness which lift them to the highest place among lyric poems. While they let us into the inmost heart of this wandering harper, they inspire us with the feeling that never was poet more worthy to be employed in writing sacred songs, not for a splendid ritual in Jerusalem, but for mortal hearts in all ages and in all lands. From the time of the bringing up of the ark to Zion, down almost to the end of his life, David seems to have found delight in this most honourable work. Well had it been if that loved employment had saved him from crimes which stain his name. Many of his compositions are headed with the simple words, 'A psalm of David.' Others of them, if they are his work, name the chief singer, for whom they were at first intended; or by whom they were written (2 Chron. xxix. 30). Asaph, who then superintended the music in Zion, is mentioned in twelve psalms;<sup>3</sup> Jeduthun, whose duty it was to serve in the tabernacle of Moses at Gibeon, is mentioned in three;<sup>4</sup> the sons of Korah, a branch of the family of the Kohathites, to which the chief singers themselves belonged, are mentioned in eleven.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalms 56 and 34.    <sup>2</sup> Psalms 52, 54, 57, 59, 63, 142.

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 50, 73-83.    <sup>4</sup> Psalms 39, 62, 77.    <sup>5</sup> Psalms 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87, 88.

We may pause at this stage of David's career to mark the change which the genius of one man had, with the blessing of God, wrought in the condition of Israel. Towards the end of Saul's reign the nation resembled a stranded ship going to pieces. Although still outwardly bound together under one head, its spirit was gone, its confidence in the king was lost. The defeat and death of Saul on Gilboa brought to light, what had formerly been concealed, the miserable wreck of Hebrew unity. Man ceased to have confidence in man; a once united people was broken up into a number of little fragments, which floated hither and thither, and were even dashed against each other by events, precisely as the masts and boards of a wrecked ship are dashed against each other by the waves. It was reserved for David to build up in unity and strength this shattered kingdom. For ten or twelve years he laboured at the work. Sometimes, when the end seemed almost attained, an unlooked-for disappointment threw things back into wreck and confusion. But after much weary waiting, the glory of uniting the scattered fragments of Hebrew nationality became David's. The reorganized state was assailed from without by the Philistines, who read their own fate in David's success. Every failure of the enemy to regain their former footing among the twelve tribes was, as it were, a fresh rivet driven in to fasten the new-made kingdom more firmly together. But success against enemies without was not enough. There must be somewhat to bind together friends within. And he sought what Saul had recklessly thrown away, the bond of a common faith to strengthen that of a common king. Internal union he justly regarded as the surest bulwark against foreign foes. By bringing up the ark to Zion, and by restoring the priests to their former place in the state, he brought back the nation to that point from which it had gone aside in Saul's reign. And he brought it back, purified by suffering, to run a career of glory such as has fallen to the lot of no other kingdom. At the beginning of this period David proposed to

build a temple for the ark. Had he been allowed to carry out his purpose, the energies of king and people would have been spent for years on a work which the nation was not prepared to undertake. The enemies of the Hebrews were nearly as strong as ever. If a weaker hand than David's swayed the sceptre, they might be able to undo all that he had done in uniting his people. It was most impolitic to turn his mind to the building of a temple, a work on which the best of his years would be spent, while the power of neighbouring nations was still unbroken. David's work was to prepare for a lasting peace by waging successful war. A true view of his position would lead him to think of humbling thoroughly the many invaders who had often trampled on the Hebrews. Were he to spend several years in mere works of building, he might leave to his son a legacy of war and bloodshed. But by putting himself at the head of the warlike spirit awakened among his people, he might effectually vindicate the freedom of the Hebrews, and give them, what they greatly needed, many years of prosperity and peace. The future of the kingdom would then depend on the observance of the laws, by which David had united it into a mighty God-fearing empire. But while he appears, in the next chapter of his life, as the great securer of his country's freedom, there is also the beginning of a falling away, which threatened to undo the work he had laboriously accomplished. During the early part of his reign, David is presented to us consulting Jehovah in every season of danger. He had that confidence in the uprightness of his policy, which warranted him to repair with a true heart to this heavenly Friend. Even his proposal to build a palace for Jehovah is followed by success in every war undertaken for the safety of his people, as if that success were a direct reward for his pious purpose. But in the years which follow, Jehovah is seen sending angry messages to David, and not David asking counsel of Jehovah. The contrast is too marked to be without meaning. The

sunny side of David's life is past ; we begin to enter on days of cloud and darkness.

Having cleared the soil of Palestine of enemies who had lorded it there for many years, David now prepared to secure the liberty of his country by seeking the enemies in their own strongholds. A reckoning for the past was first sought from the Philistines. They appear to have been defeated in battle not far from Gath. That city, with the villages around it, was then taken and garrisoned by David.<sup>1</sup> The man who had once slunk into the city, who was seized by the king's officers as a dangerous inmate, and was let go by the king as a harmless madman,—the man who was afterwards received within its walls as a renegade from his own people, and was promoted to be captain of its sovereign's guard, now holds it as a conqueror. But he did not abuse his power. David, instead of being tributary to Achish, has become master of him and of all that he had. He allowed the humbled prince to retain his throne and to govern his people. David was recognised as lord paramount of the country. In this campaign, Philistia, to use the expressive phrase of the sacred writer, was brought to her knees. She was not entirely prostrated. After tasting the bitter fruits of bondage for a few years, she gathered strength once more to stand on her feet and defy her oppressor. But the blow inflicted in this campaign made her powerless to do much harm to the Hebrews.

The hand of David next fell on Moab, an ancient foe of the Hebrews. But it was no longer the bringing of a nation to its knees ; it was now the smiting of it down to the ground. Like the Philistines, the Moabites had befriended David when he was an outlaw. But on them, as well as on the Philistines, the hand of the conqueror fell with crushing weight. The nations, first attacked by David in his day of

<sup>1</sup> Metheg-Ammah, the bridle of Ammah, or the bridle of the mother city. Gath is called the metropolis or mother city of the Philistines. Having gained its bridle, David, like a rider on horseback, had it completely in hand.



power, were those which had shown him kindness in his day of weakness. The reason of this in the case of the Philistines is plain. Had not David thrown off their yoke, his kingdom could not have held together. Sound policy required the Hebrew king either to crush Philistia or to become its tributary. But from Moab he had little or nothing to dread. And if the independence of Moab was not a source of danger to him, its subjection could be of small advantage. None of the great commercial roads of those times, the source of toll and tax to Eastern princes, were controlled by its kings or passed through its territories. From the hills of Moab a tribute of several thousand sheep might be brought every year to Jerusalem; but, apart from this tax, there does not appear to have been public advantage or private gain likely to accrue from conquering the country. The cause of the invasion of Moab, or Sheth, as it is also called, lies much deeper. Notwithstanding the hilly nature of the country, it was overrun and subdued. The people were not soldiers to be despised. One of the great achievements of David's Mighties was the slaying, by Benaiah from Kabzeel, of two Moabite soldiers, evidently in this campaign. They are called *Aricks*, God's lions (2 Sam. xxiii. 20). A terrible slaughter seems to have struck terror into the people, for David's orders were to put two to death for every one who was allowed to live. To what extent these orders were carried out,—whether they applied only to those who offered resistance, or to the whole nation,—and for what reason they were given, are points involved in darkness. History has furnished the simple record of the fact, without even indicating the numbers who perished. But David was not a remorseless shedder of blood. Nor was he given to striking down vanquished foes. He had good grounds for dealing thus sharply with the hill-men of Moab. And we shall see presently that these grounds may not be altogether beyond the reach of discovery. But of the thoroughness of the conquest, the events of the following years furnish convincing

proof. When the Ammonite war broke out, and David's forces were compelled to return to Jerusalem from a drawn battle, the highlanders of Moab never lifted a hand to expel their conquerors. From the far north-east came a mighty gathering of men and horse to help the enemies of David; but the Moabites, though commanding from their hills a view of the plains, in which opposing armies wrestled for supremacy in the East, never descended from the heights to join in the conflict. Generations passed away before prostrated Moab gave signs of returning life.

Whoever believes that the book of the Law was studied by David as a genuine heirloom of the Hebrew race, can feel no surprise at this conquest of Moab. He may deplore the rule of slaying and sparing followed by the conqueror, but he can account for the overthrow of the Moabite power. Feuds between nations were handed down from age to age in those days, as they still are in the East. Such was the custom, such it continues to be. We may regret it, we may also condemn it, even though we be not wholly free from it ourselves; but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact of its existence among the Hebrews. Although the lawgiver, at the entrance of Israel into Canaan, forbade the people to meddle with Moab or Edom, David could not study the book of the Law without being impressed by its predictions of Israel's ultimate triumph over Moab, Edom, and Amalek. The smiter of Moab is called 'a star out of Jacob,' 'a sceptre out of Israel.' In the prediction of these events (Num. xxiv. 17-20) this great smiter is not spoken of as also the destroyer of Amalek. A crown of glory is thrown on the brows of the former by the ancient seer which is withheld from the latter. But when sacred learning bloomed into the freshness of a second youth in David's days, Amalek, as the seer foretold, had been 'for ever' blotted out from the roll of nations. Saul had fulfilled that part of the prediction. But no smiter of Moab and no possessor of Edom had yet arisen. Saul had waged

successful war with both nations, but he neither destroyed 'all the children of Sheth,' nor made Edom a possession of Israel. A prince of David's poetic temperament and religious fire could not read these predictions without seeing in himself, what he really was, the star of Jacob, the sceptre of Israel, by whom these nations were destined to be struck down. 'Smite the corners of Moab,' 'Destroy the children of Sheth' (warlike tumult), 'Destroy him that remaineth of the city' (Petra), were the rules which the smiter of Moab and Edom may have thought himself bound to follow. After the fate of Saul, after the more recent death of Uzzah, David would fulfil them to the letter. Viewed in this light, the fierce war on Moab and the thoroughness of the conquest are susceptible of a natural explanation.

The might of the Hebrew king, and the attitude he had taken up towards his neighbours, seem to have awakened the fears of Hadadezer, the powerful king of Zobah, a country on the north-east frontier of Palestine. He belonged to the great confederacy called 'The kings of the Hittites,'—perhaps he was then its head. A dispute had arisen between him and David regarding a district near the Euphrates. According to the books of Samuel and Chronicles, the boundary had been marked by a pillar or hand, a practice which was common in Egypt, Assyria, and the neighbouring countries. That landmark had been thrown down; and the object of Hadadezer was to set it up again in defiance of the Hebrew forces, which were in the neighbourhood. Evidently the Hebrews had taken possession of lands which he claimed for Zobah. Raising a large army, he marched into the district to assert his rights. But David was prepared to meet force with force. He engaged the Syrian in battle, defeated him with great loss, and captured many chariots, horsemen, and foot-soldiers.<sup>1</sup> The Syrians of Damascus hastened to succour Zobah. But

<sup>1</sup> The number of the captives is thus given, perhaps from different points of view:—

the Hebrews were again victorious. Twenty-two thousand of the allies fell in battle, and the power of Damascus was broken for more than a generation. The city was taken by the conqueror, and Hebrew garrisons were left in its strongholds. Great spoil rewarded the victors in these two battles. From the pillage of the camp of Hadadezer David received as his share, the golden arms or shields, which the guards of that prince carried when on duty. Some of his chief cities also were captured, and furnished the Hebrews with a vast weight of copper, which was afterwards used in furnishing the courts of Solomon's temple.

But the Syrians of Zobah and Damascus, though beaten in the field, were not subdued. David found himself unable to follow up his victories. Tidings of disasters which had befallen his armies in the south recalled him from his career of triumph. Edom, taking advantage of these entanglements in the north, had given no small trouble to the Hebrew officers on the frontier. Although the history is silent, David's vexation on receiving news of the losses suffered by his generals in that quarter has been preserved in one of his sacred songs: 'O God,' it runs, 'Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast scattered us, Thou hast been displeased; . . . Thou hast showed Thy people hard things; Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.' A song of sorrow such as this, following hard on the victories in the north, reveals the

2 Sam. viii. 4, 1700 horsemen, 20,000 footmen.

1 Chron. xviii. 4, 1000 chariots (recheb), 7000 horsemen, 20,000 footmen.

The word chariot means both that which was used for riding in and the men or horses employed. 'David houghed all the chariot,' that is, horses. Among the tribes of Gaul there were six men about every chariot. These might be footmen or horsemen. If there was something similar in Syria, it would explain the difference between 1700 horsemen in the book of Samuel and 7000 in the book of Chronicles, without having recourse to errors of transcribers. Our own word *artillery* has also a twofold meaning, denoting either the guns or the soldiers and horses who serve them. At the review of British troops in Cairo (Oct. 1, 1882), 'the heavy Field Artillery brought up the rear of this division, consisting of 4320 horses and 60 guns.' According to 1 Macc. vi. 35, an elephant in the Syrian army was supported by 1000 footmen and 500 cavalry. Comp. 2 Sam. x. 18 and 1 Chron. xix. 18.

unfortunate issue of the campaign against Edom; for the Psalmist continues: 'Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not Thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? Even Thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?' (Ps. lx.). Serious disasters only could have wrung from him these bitter words. David's presence was required in the south of Palestine before he could thoroughly crush his enemies in the north. But the report of his coming seems to have filled the Edomites with alarm. Abishai, the brother of Joab, defeated them in the Valley of Salt, that narrow plain at the southern end of the Dead Sea, where miles of lofty salt cliffs, with pillars of salt and limpid streams of bitterest brine, give a fitting name to the barren waste.<sup>1</sup> Eighteen thousand of the enemy fell in an engagement in which Abishai commanded the Hebrews; in another battle David himself or Joab commanded, and twelve thousand Edomites were slain. The honours of the war fell to David only: 'He gat him a name (when he returned from smiting of the Syrians) in the Valley of Salt.' Selah, the strong capital of Edom, became the prey of the Hebrews. For six months Joab, fierce and relentless, slaughtered every man and boy whom he could lay hands on in the country. A few escaped into the pasture-grounds of Midian, carrying with them a child named Hadad, the only member of the royal family saved from the slaughter. The oases, the pastures, and the wastes of Edom ceased to be the abode of an independent race. Hebrew garrisons held all the strongholds; Hebrew tax-gatherers collected tribute; and Hebrew soldiers were soon watching the great commercial roads from India by

<sup>1</sup> 'Jebel Usdom is a solid mass of rock salt;' 'we walked for three miles along its eastern face in the hope of finding some means of ascending it, but it was quite impracticable.' 'In several places we found the ground hollow, and in some a laden camel has suddenly disappeared and been salted to death below.' 'The height of the pinnacle which I climbed was 347 feet above the level of the Dead Sea.' 'The Sebkha, or salt flat, is a large flat at least six by ten miles, occasionally flooded, but now dry.'—Tristram, *Land of Israel*, 322-332.

the Red Sea to Damascus or Tyre, which this conquest put in David's power. Edom, like Moab, was thoroughly crushed.

These victories of David gained him the respect of neighbouring princes. Nahash, king of Ammon, was his friend and ally. Toi, king of Hamath, whose dominions included the narrow pass by which the Promised Land might be invaded from the north, sought his friendship. Joram or Hadoram, the son of Toi, came to congratulate him on the triumph over Hadadezer, their common foe. Probably Toi, as well as Hadadezer, was a member of the Hittite confederacy. He also requested from David a treaty of peace. As a pledge of the Syrian king's sincerity, the embassy brought to Jerusalem a tribute of gold, silver, and brass. But while the Hebrew kingdom was thus acquiring power abroad, it was also settling into a regular political system at home. A body of guardsmen, known as Cherethites and Pelethites, took the place of the three thousand in Saul's court. It was their duty to watch over the king's person, and to perform his commands. They were messengers of state as well as executioners of justice. Probably the words mean 'Cutters and runners,' that is, 'Executioners and messengers.' A body of soldiers, who either followed David from Gath, or for some other reason received the name of Gittites, were also held in high honour at court. Whether they had any connection with the Cherethites and Pelethites, it is impossible to determine. No explanation is given of the duties, the organization, or the origin of the Runners. The author of the book of Samuel was evidently writing for readers, who lived so near David's time as not to require information on these points. He always mentions them as one who knew that his readers had a general acquaintance with the regiment.<sup>1</sup> An officer of the highest rank, Benaiah,

<sup>1</sup> In a somewhat similar manner the Apostle John makes mention of the 'Twelve,' taking it for granted that his readers had other means of ascertaining who these twelve were.

the son of Jehoiada, was their captain. A fifth part of all the men of Israel able to bear arms was under the command of Joab. The whole of this large force, numbering 288,000, was seldom called out at the same time. It was divided into twelve brigades of 24,000 men each, officered by the boldest soldiers whom David's eventful life had brought into public regard. Once a year each of them did duty for a month at a time in Jerusalem, a system which, without pressing heavily on the people, or withdrawing them from the ordinary duties of life, was a sure safeguard against invasion. In five years every man able to bear arms had spent a month at least in this militia force.

The administration of justice remained in the king's own hands. Inferior judges throughout the provinces heard complaints in the first instance, although an appeal was always allowed to the king himself in the capital. But the people had cause to complain of the king's disregard of his duty as chief judge in the land. The high-priesthood was no longer held by Abiathar, the companion of David in his wanderings, the sufferer for David's sin. Zadok, the brave priest who took the lead in raising David to the throne of All-Israel, was joined with Abiathar in discharging the duties of that office. The two high priests were the heads of rival houses. Zadok was descended from Eleazar, the third son of Aaron; Abiathar, or, as he is also called, Ahimelech (1 Chron. xxiv. 3, 31), from Ithamar, the fourth son. By what means or for what reason the family of Eleazar lost the priesthood has not been recorded. But the honour was not destined to remain in the house of Aaron's youngest son. Many years before, judgment had been passed on that branch of Aaron's family. The prediction then made was fulfilled. The Ithamar household were losing their hold on the nation, while the family of Eleazar was growing in numbers and in influence. Zadok, the representative of the latter house, was the prince of the Aaronites, the chief man of the tribe of Levi. And when the roll of

the Levitical families was made up by David and his officers, sixteen were found tracing their origin to Eleazar and only eight to Ithamar. The right of the Eleazar house to the high-priesthood also could not be gainsaid. Zadok was thus able to plead in support of his claims great services to David, great influence as the real leader of the tribe of Levi, and birthright as the representative of Aaron. But Abiathar was the tried companion of all David's dangers, and the man whom he swore to befriend through life. He could not be deprived of his office. By associating Zadok with him in the high-priesthood, a middle way was found for reconciling these conflicting claims. As the Mosaic altar and tabernacle were at Gibeon, while the ark was in Zion, the divided worship seemed to require two high priests. Zadok presided in Gibeon, though he did not always live there; Abiathar was priest on Zion. David thus exerted his sovereign power by retaining for Abiathar the moiety of a high office to which another had a better right. He inherited the doom uttered against his ancestor, Eli. Events were slowly working out that doom. But David never proved false to the oath of friendship which he swore. Had he been as regardless of oaths and promises as many princes have been, he would have bowed to the times, and have left Abiathar to his fate. But he acted a nobler part. After the death of Ahithophel, Abiathar was even raised to the office of king's counsellor, a post of honour which he shared evidently with Benaiah (1 Chron. xxvii. 34).

Among the great officers of state there appear to have been a number of dignitaries who, though not belonging to the tribe of Levi, went by the name commonly given to the sons of Aaron, *Priests* (*Cohanim*). They neither served at the altar nor shared in its honours and profits. But as the Hebrew word for *priest* anciently meant *prince* also, that name was retained to designate these dignitaries. The writer of the first book of Chronicles, aware of this difficulty, calls them 'chiefs,' and not 'priests.' Among these Cohanim were



the princes of the blood. Benaiah, the captain of the guard, is called the chief Cohen.<sup>1</sup> Ira the Jairite is also mentioned as one of the body of Cohanim. On high days of festival or pageant they stood beside the king (1 Chron. xviii. 17). But this use of the word Cohanim was becoming obsolete. As public business increased by the growth of David's empire, the necessity of employing several secretaries of state was forced upon him. Such we may call Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, who filled the office of recorder, to relate the achievements of his master in war, and his decisions on the judgment-seat in peace. Shavsha, or, as he is also called, Sheva, became scribe; and Adoram was appointed over the tribute, which now began to come in from subject states. The duties which the latter discharged varied with the nature of the tribute imposed on conquered people. Sometimes it was gold and silver; at other times sheep, cattle, and country produce were demanded; but, during many years of Solomon's reign, the tribute seems to have been also labour from slaves, furnished by the wealthy and the noble in Israel. In course of time David gathered round him a few wise men, in whom he put more confidence than in the officers of state already mentioned. Among those, to whose counsel he usually had resort, is mentioned Ahithophel the Gilonite. He belonged to David's own tribe of Judah. His power of seeing what men ought to do in trying times seemed to his contemporaries almost divine. All his counsel to David bore this stamp. Hushai, though less gifted with this power than Ahithophel, was more a man after David's own heart. If we may judge from the name applied to him, the Archite, he belonged to the tribe of Ephraim (Josh. xvi. 2). He was called the king's friend. Jonathan, a son of David's uncle (Jer. xxxii. 9, 12), was

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xxvii. 5. The English version has 'a chief priest' by a wrong rendering for 'the chief priest.' He belonged to Kabzeel, which was not a priestly city, and his father Jehoiada must not be confounded with Jehoiada, the prince of the Aaronites (1 Chron. xii. 27).

another of the wise men whom the king admitted into his cabinet council. And with such care did David watch over the training of his young sons for the high offices they might be called on to fill, that he appointed another counsellor, Jehiel, the son of Hachmoni, to guide them by his advice.

For the better ordering of the kingdom, David had recourse to a plan which formerly prevailed among the Hebrews. During the sojourn in the wilderness, each tribe had a head or leader called its prince. David revived this office. Among the names mentioned on the list of princes are Elihu, who became prince of Judah, and Jaasiel, son of Abner, who became prince of Benjamin. In the former we probably recognise Eliab, David's ill-natured brother. The great-hearted king had forgotten past wrongs. He could say of his brethren what Joseph had said of his: what they meant for evil, God had overruled for good. The name of Jaasiel is proof both of the innocence of David and of the sincerity of his grief, when Abner fell under the assassin's sword. There was much in Abner's history on which David might have fastened to justify neglect of Abner's children; but the great chief of Benjamin died in his service and for his sake. Whatever may have been the evil points in David's character, the goodness of heart shown in these appointments of Jaasiel and Elihu ought to be mentioned to his honour.

Among the neighbours of David who still retained their independence was Nahash, king of Ammon. He may have been the same prince who besieged Jabesh Gilead in the beginning of Saul's reign. When neighbouring nations were conquered, this prince enjoyed his throne in peace, not because he was too strong to be meddled with, but for a reason which may be got from the ancient literature of the Hebrews. While the wandering Israelites were advancing from the desert towards Edom, Moab, and Ammon, four centuries before, Moses gave them strict orders to avoid injuring these kingdoms: 'Distress them not, nor meddle with them, for I

will not give thee of their land a possession' (Deut. ii. 5, 9, 19).<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding these orders by the lawgiver, David had taken possession of Edom and Moab; he acted in fulfilment of prophecy. But Ammon was not mentioned in that ancient prediction. Hence the distinction drawn in observing, or not observing, the commands of the lawgiver. The prophecy of Balaam was fulfilled, and the orders of Moses were kept. Private reasons also existed for David's forbearance. In ways unknown to us, Nahash had befriended David in less prosperous days. When he died, leaving a prince named Hanun (Gracious) to succeed him, the remembrance of kindness, formerly received from the father, prompted David to repay it by kindness to the son; especially as the greatness of David's kingdom was casting a dangerous shadow on the lesser kingdom of Ammon. Accordingly, he sent an embassy to Rabbah for that purpose. But his officers were received with suspicion and treated with insult. The Ammonite chiefs persuaded their prince that David's real object was to spy out the city. Acting on that idea, he had the Hebrews seized and so disfigured that their appearance would excite ridicule. He then sent them away from Rabbah. Tidings of the disgrace done to the ambassadors soon reached David. Men of high standing, the representatives of his own dignity, had been so outraged when in the discharge of a commission of kindness, that they could not return to the capital till time had repaired the injuries done. They were ordered to remain at Jericho.

David lost no time in avenging this outrage. His zeal was quickened by news from Ammon. An army of 33,000 mercenaries, principally chariot-men and cavalry from Zobah,

<sup>1</sup> If the book of Deuteronomy represented, as is often said, the feelings common in the time of Isaiah, its orders regarding these three nations are in flagrant opposition to his words. All-Israel 'shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them' (Isa. xi. 14)—words not explained by Deut. xxiii. 3-6.

Maachah, and Ishtob, were on their march to defend Rabbah. A thousand talents of silver was the price paid for their services. On their arrival, they were posted at Medeba, a town south-west of the Ammonite capital, perhaps as an incentive to Moab to revolt. The Hebrew army, intended to act against the allies, was probably the division of 24,000 which happened to be on duty in Jerusalem. But along with it were sent the tried soldiers and captains of David, known as the 'Mighties,' in themselves a tower of strength to an army. On their approach the Syrians marched to the neighbourhood of Rabbah, while the Ammonites kept within the city. Joab was thus placed in a position of great danger. He could not bring the mounted Syrians to battle, for the Hebrews, according to the custom of their nation, fought on foot; and he could not assault Rabbah without exposing his troops to an attack in front and rear at the same time. Fortunately, however, the allies, trusting to superior numbers, offered battle. The Ammonites drew up before the walls of the city; the Syrians hung off, waiting to fall on the rear of the Hebrews. Joab adopted the best means of meeting the danger. Arraying the Mighties and the choicest of his troops against the Syrians, he put himself at their head, while he committed the rest of the army to Abishai to watch, rather than to engage the Ammonites. Joab knew he would have to fight for safety: victory he could not hope to win. Fierce and bad though he was, he felt a glow of enthusiasm in view of the dangers which hung over the Hebrew kingdom at that moment. The kings of the Hittites had come in force to fight David, as their fathers fought Rameses of Egypt, and as their sons fought Sargon of Assyria. 'Be of good courage,' he said, 'and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good.' He expected defeat for himself or Abishai. Hope had not sunk lower in his breast, but many in the Hebrew army must have feared worse things. In the event of disaster

befalling the one general, the other would detach succours for his help. With his usual skill, Joab infused courage into his men by leading them against the Syrian horsemen and chariots. He did not wait, as others might have done, till they chose to attack him. He feared the withering influence on his men of hanging back from offered battle. Success crowned his efforts: the Syrians fled from the Hebrew infantry. It may have been their design to draw Joab away from the division of Abishai, or to weary out the pursuing army by fleeing at one time, and turning to fight at another. But on seeing the retreat of their allies, the Ammonites withdrew into the city, a movement not free from danger, if the enemy felt strong enough to attack. Whatever the cause of these movements may have been, Joab, feeling himself not only outnumbered, but in serious danger, took advantage of his apparent triumph to return to Jerusalem, probably by night.

Though the allies do not appear to have had the worst in this combat, they saw the necessity of preparing to meet a more numerous force. The thunder-cloud, which had passed over them without doing damage, was but the forerunner of a fiercer storm. Anticipating the danger, the Syrians summoned to their aid their Hittite brethren from the eastern bank of the Euphrates. Hadadezer, smarting under his previous defeat, was the head of this alliance: his commander-in-chief, Shobach, led the army. David received tidings of the advancing tide of war, before it deluged his dominion on the farther bank of Jordan, and surged around the walls of Rabbah. Gathering the whole forces of his empire, he led them in person across the Jordan, and met the enemy at Helam, a town not far from the borders of Syria. The battle that ensued was bloody and decisive, a fitting close to the long line of campaigns, in which David took part. Shobach was killed; forty thousand of his foot-soldiers and seven thousand of his chariot-men fell in the combat or in the pursuit. The power of Hadadezer and

the Hittite confederacy was broken ; but David appears to have felt the greatness of the danger his kingdom would encounter, if he forced the tribes of Mesopotamia to band together against his arms. Accordingly, peace was at once granted to ambassadors sent from the tributary princes of Zobah. A barren profession of homage was their only acknowledgment of defeat ; Zobah was seized, and Rabbah was left to its fate.

The wars of David occupy but a small space in the history of his reign. An act of kindness towards the son of his early friend, Jonathan, is told at greater length than the battles and triumphs of these numerous wars. Of his own accord, and in remembrance of his vows of friendship, he caused inquiries to be made for any of the house of Saul to whom he could show kindness. That house was sunk so low as to be lost to sight. Even the estates of the family had been seized by its servant or slave. No fear could thus be entertained of any of its sons contending with David for the crown. Neither Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, nor Merab's children, had the courage to claim their father's property from his unworthy retainer, Ziba. Michal, who could have done them service, had probably caused them fear by her foolish acting and her subsequent disgrace. David had allowed ten years to elapse without thinking of his early vows of friendship. Cares of state may have interfered with the discharge of this duty. But at last it asserted its power. Ziba was summoned to the palace. From him the king learned Mephibosheth's place of abode : ' he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar,' not far from Mahanaim. The cripple, who was then about twenty-five years of age, and a dependent on the bounty of Machir, was sent for to Zion. Apparently the message filled him with apprehensions. ' Fear not,' the king said, ' I will restore to thee all the land of Saul thy father ; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.' David, as chief judge of the nation, was entitled to give this decision

regarding Saul's estates. But he did more. Calling in Ziba, he announced to him the change in his condition: 'I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house;' thou and thy sons and thy servants go with the land. Ziba bowed low on hearing these unwelcome tidings: fifteen sons and twenty servants handed over with himself to this fugitive cripple! He submitted, but resolved to bide his time. Mephibosheth became the king's guest in the palace; the landowner, Ziba, became the slave of Mephibosheth; and David's kindness to the cripple was remembered for his good by Machir of Lo-debar a few years after. The sacred writer's object is to show us the man David in his greatness of soul, more than the king in his majesty of power. And the same purpose guides his pen in reviewing the wars, which brought David's career of conquest to an end. It is not his object to shower praises at random on the head of a hero. Nor does he mislead us by enshrining in history a prince laurelled with unfading flowers of goodness. If he delights in presenting the king of All-Israel in this light, he is not slack to portray him for us with these flowers withering or dead. He shows us the triumph of right over might; the majesty of uprightness, not the tinsel of a court; the doings of God, not the doings of an earthly king.

Ammon offered but a feeble resistance to the Hebrews after the battle of Helam. All their cities except Rabbah were taken in the beginning of the following year. Rabbah itself was closely beleaguered. Its strong position, the existence of a water supply within its walls, and the inability of the Hebrews to conduct siege operations, gave the survivors of the nation a respite from destruction. But the war yields in importance to events which were then taking place at Jerusalem. It was a hot day in the beginning of summer. The army, the Mighties, the chief captains, and the priests with the ark of God were before Rabbah. After his noon-tide sleep, David was walking on the flat roof of the palace.

So closely packed were the houses around, that he could see distinctly from the roof what was passing in neighbouring dwellings. It was reckoned a breach of good manners to be curious in these matters. But as the roofs were guarded by parapet walls, no one could look down on the houses beneath, unless prompted by curiosity or unlawful ends. There was one house close by of which David seems to have heard. In a moment of weakness that evening he looked over the parapet wall of the palace roof. An open lattice showed what was passing within. He was near enough to see a woman of singular beauty bathing beside the window. He calls to his attendants who were on the roof. Evidently they had told him of the woman, of her beauty, and of the time when she bathed—those wretched hangers-on about a palace, who live by corruption and vice. ‘Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’ he asks of them: for the question is David’s, and not information given by a messenger. They had laid the train of unlawful passion; the fire is stealing on to an explosion; and instead of stamping it out, they speed it on its way. By David’s orders, some of them invite Bathsheba to the palace. She does not refuse. Her brave husband is disregarded. To be the paramour of a king is better in her eyes than to be the honest wife of a brave soldier. Death by burning was the doom she merited according to the Hebrew custom; death by stoning was the doom incurred by her seducer. More lingering, painful punishments befell that guilty pair.<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks pass away; Rabbah is still holding out; there is no prospect of a home-coming of the army. Bathsheba sends to inform David that their sin cannot long be hid from her relatives. He is greatly alarmed. Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, belonged to the order of the Mighties. Every one of these brave men would feel the wrong done to

<sup>1</sup> Those who disparage the book of Kings accuse the author, for a purpose of his own, of deliberately omitting this foul story from his book. But it is they who deserve disparagement. He does not conceal it: 1 Kings xv. 5.



Uriah to be a violation of the sacredness of their own homes. But Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, a name which is also found on the roll of David's Mighties. If Uriah were married to a daughter of another of the Mighties, the difficulties and fears of David would be greatly increased. And this Eliam was the son of Ahithophel, the king's chief counsellor. Disaffection among his bravest soldiers and best advisers would be the result of a discovery of the intrigue with Bathsheba. Fear took away good sense: one great sin led to another and a greater, till the end of the whole was livelong misery to the king.

Driven to desperation, David sends for Uriah from the army. The king and his servants who were in the plot, men who would all the while ridicule the terror of their sovereign, in vain advise him to repair to his own house. Unsuspecting and straightforward, or knowing too much of his wife's unfaithfulness to be deceived, the brave soldier sleeps in the palace court, out in the open air, as Joab and the army were doing. A more touching tale than the simple honesty of Uriah and the incredible meanness of David was never written. At last the king must send the soldier away. But he sent along with him orders for his death. In a despatch which Uriah carried to Joab, David directed the general to place him at a point of danger, to provoke a sally from the town, to retire without withdrawing Uriah, and to make sure of his death in battle. Joab acted up to these orders, aware, perhaps, of the reason for them, since some of the king's favourite servants may have kept him informed of the most secret gossip of the palace. A small body of Hebrews, led by Uriah, attacked one of the best-defended gates of Rabbah. Shooters discharged stones and arrows from the wall; soldiers rushed out of the town. A fierce fight ensued. No supports were sent to strengthen the handful of Hebrews in front of the gate. Uriah, with several of his soldiers, fell in battle; the rest of the assailants were repulsed. Their king had

murdered those who fell. Tidings of the death of the wronged soldier were immediately sent to Jerusalem. David pretended to look on it as one of the ordinary chances of war. Bathsheba, too, pretended to mourn for the husband she had dishonoured and killed. When the usual days of mourning were passed, David took her into his palace as one of his wives. Their iniquity seemed to be covered over from the public gaze. Two or three of the servants knew one-half of the story; Joab was aware of another half at least; and the relations of Bathsheba, her father and grandfather especially, may have suspected something wrong. But the dreadful story was buried out of sight in the almost impenetrable recesses of an Eastern palace. Only the faintest whisper of the scandal could at first have reached the outside world. Vileness had triumphed, blood had been shed, and in the grave of a brave soldier the guilty king hoped all this wickedness was buried and forgotten. It was not so. There was an Avenger of blood looking on, who had seen the whole from beginning to end: 'The thing that David had done displeased the Lord.'

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE AVENGER OF BLOOD.

(2 SAM. xii. 1-xxi. 22; 1 CHRON. xix. 1-xx. 8.)

THE sharp edge of David's fears lest the intrigue with Bathsheba should be discovered has worn off; the clouds have cleared away; the sky is again bright for the Hebrew king. A child is born to Bathsheba. But in reality judgment against an evil work had been delayed only for a few months. One day David's friend Nathan presents himself in the king's private chamber, and demands justice. He relates a touching tale of woeful wrong-doing in a city under David's sway. A wealthy landowner, rejoicing in numerous herds and flocks, sees with envious eyes the one ewe lamb which forms his poor but honest neighbour's sole possession. It was the delight of the poor man's children, it was his own solace in hours of afterwork, in short, it 'was unto him as a daughter.' But when a traveller came to the rich man one day, the host grudged to entertain his guest with kid or lamb from his own numerous flocks; he sent and with violent hand reft away the ewe lamb that was as the poor man's daughter. With kindling anger David listens to this tale of wrong. Believing some of his great men had done the deed, and that Nathan was keeping back the offender's name, lest justice should be robbed of its due, the king at first passes sentence of death, and then, remembering the award of the law in such cases, ordains a fourfold restitution by the robber. But anger gave place to other feelings, when, perhaps in reply to his demand for the rich man's name, Nathan sternly

replied, 'Thou art the man.' Then followed a terrible tearing aside of the veil which David hoped was thrown over his crimes. Nor was punishment concealed. A shadow fell over the king's whole future life. Evil was to rise against him out of his own household; his wives should be dishonoured, not with the knowledge of two or three servants, but in the sight of the sun; in short, the sword should never depart from his house. David and Bathsheba were forgiven by the real King of Israel; sentence of death was not passed by Him whose grace could pardon. But Jehovah exacted vengeance. And as a foretaste of coming woes, a warning, too, not to set lightly by these predictions, Nathan informed him that Bathsheba's infant son should not live.<sup>1</sup>

The awakening of David from his dream of security found expression in song. Every time his heart was deeply stirred by joy, or grief, or fear, he seems to have sought an outlet for his feelings in the companionship of his harp, that pure delight which cheered him amid the cares of empire, the dangers of exile, and the quiet of a shepherd's life. The agony of sorrow, after Nathan left him to his own thoughts, wrung from him the exquisite elegy over his fall from virtue which we read in the book of Psalms (Ps. li.). Suddenly, the child of Bathsheba, the *darling*, as it is called, fell sick. Nathan's words were not words of course. They were growing into things of terrible reality. As the sickness increased, the alarm of David at a dreadful Something hanging over his

<sup>1</sup> The reason assigned by Nathan is that David 'had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.' There were thus doubters or sceptics in Jerusalem in those times. But the existence of a party of philosophic inquirers into the dealings of Jehovah with His chosen people is of too much consequence to be passed over without remark. With doubters or philosophers watching the course of human thought in those times, the quiet addition of new laws to the existing Mosaic code, and much more the first introduction of that code under the name of Moses, were feats of invention impossible to David or any of the sages in his court. They who were ready to blaspheme the suspicious doings of the king towards Uriah, would not allow to pass an attempt at cheating the nation into the belief, that Moses wrote what every one knew Moses had nothing to do with.

house increased also. Night and day he fasted, lying on the ground. The elders of his palace stood round him, unable to divine the causes of this sorrow. But they could not persuade him to rise, or to partake of food. He fasted, he prayed, to turn aside an unseen hand raised to strike the first of many blows. Should that blow not fall, the others might be turned aside too, or might lose much of their weight. For the first time he was facing the reality of punishment. Judgment at last awoke, after slumbering for nearly twelve months. If its first strokes were so hard to bear, and if bitterest regret could bring to David no withdrawing of the rod, the next stroke might be tenfold more heavy. All these fears passed through the king's heart. An avenger of blood was on his track—an avenger, too, from whom there was no escaping, and against whom no city of refuge had been provided. But the elders and servants of the palace saw nothing save the illness of a child and the excessive grief of a father. And they were unable to connect the latter with the former. For six days the sickness lasted. All that time David struggled to hold the hand of the Avenger back from striking. On the seventh day the boy died. The servants, afraid to inform their lord lest grief might drive him to despair, stood round, one whispering to another to be spokesman. But in these looks and whisperings the king read the boy's death. He asked if it were so. At once, on learning the truth, he rose from the ground; he washed, he anointed himself. Then he appeared in the place of general concourse, more so, indeed, than the crowded city-gate—the court of the tabernacle. It was evident to all the people that the king had recovered from his grief. Returning thence to the palace, he ordered the servants to supply him with food after his long fast. They expressed their surprise at the coolness with which he received the tidings of his child's death. 'I shall go to him,' he said, 'but he shall not return to me,'—an answer sufficient to blind the servants to the real

causes of his sorrow. But grief does not usually work in this way; and, had they known the story as we know it, some of them might have drawn the true conclusion. David now found himself compelled to face all the evils threatened against his house, whatever shape these evils might take.

Meanwhile Joab had effected a lodgment in Rabbah. The lower town, situated among streams in the Jabbok valley and called the 'Royal City,' apparently because it contained the king's palace, was taken. The rest of the town, on the right bank of the stream, could not hold out much longer. Joab prepared everything for the assault. But he urged David to bring up reinforcements and to command the army himself. Probably the forces besieging Rabbah were insufficient to blockade the town and cut off hope of escape from the fugitives. By assembling the whole Hebrew army and surrounding the city, the war might be stamped out; while, if the survivors of the siege escaped into the neighbouring wastes, their marauding bands might cause endless annoyance along the frontier. David saw the wisdom of Joab's advice. Assembling the whole force of his kingdom, he crossed the Jordan and surrounded Rabbah before the besieged could escape. Hanun and his people soon paid a heavy price for their treatment of David's ambassadors. From the brief record of the sacred writer we may gather that, on the day the assault was delivered, Hanun decked himself in his royal robes, and combated to the last against the Hebrews. His dead body was found among the slain. The crown which he had worn was plucked from his head and set on David's by the triumphing soldiery. Rabbah and all that it contained became the spoil of the victors. The fate of the surviving citizens is involved in doubt. While some think they were sent into the royal forests as hewers of timber or cutters in the saw-pits, or became brickmakers for the king, others believe they were cruelly torn with saws or axes, and even burned to death. But the history of the following years does not square with

this alleged cruelty. Many of the people appear to have been left in the town under the rule of Shobi, a son of Nahash, and a friend of David. That prince had held aloof from the court of Ammon when it encouraged Hanun to insult David's men. He and his adherents were rewarded for this friendship when the rest of their countrymen had been punished for the crime. Among the Ammonite captives was an infant girl named 'Naamah,' or 'Delight.' She may have belonged to the royal family and been received into David's palace on the overthrow of her kindred. Many years afterwards she became the wife of Solomon.

It appears to have been about this time that Philistia, which had been only brought to its knees in former campaigns, was effectually prostrated. Probably advantage was taken of David's entanglements in the east to throw off his yoke. Encouraged by the presence among them of a family of giants, the Philistines rose against their conquerors at Gezer or Gob on the northern frontier, and at Gath farther south. At the first tidings of the revolt, David hurried to the borders, apparently with a small force. An engagement took place. The Hebrews were beaten, and David would have fallen by the sword of one of the giants had not Abishai brought help in time and slain the enemy's champion. So serious was the danger, that the Hebrew officers resolved never again to permit the king's presence with the army in the field. An accident of war might at any moment 'quench the lamp of Israel.' The hopes of the Philistines rested mainly on a few men of great stature, who 'were born to the giant in Gath.' Whether they were the sons of Goliath, who was slain by David many years before, or merely of the same family, cannot now be made out. But one of them bore the same name, and may have been Goliath's son. Our translators made him Goliath's brother. In various battles four of these giants were slain, and the Philistines defeated. In the end their country was thoroughly conquered.

The joy of David in these crowning triumphs of the Hebrew arms was doomed to be blighted by another stroke of the Avenger of blood. His large palace was filled with sons and daughters. Amnon, the eldest, the son of Ahinoam, was twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. Absalom, the third born, and Adonijah were a year or two younger. These young men were sons of different mothers. Amnon, or as he appears to have been called in the playful language of affection, Aminon (*faithful*), is a name found elsewhere on the rolls of Jewish families. The young prince had apartments in the palace; he was waited on by a man-servant, and his most trusted companion was his own cousin Jonadab, the son of Shimeah or Shammah, David's brother. The two cousins, though not perhaps much unlike in age, were altogether unlike in parts. Jonadab was 'very wise,' quick to mark signs of change, which escaped the eyes of less observant men, ready in counsel, fertile of resource, unscrupulous in deeds. Probably he aspired to be to the king's eldest son what Hushai was to the king, his friend. This much we know with certainty—Amnon was but a tool in his crafty cousin's hands. He acknowledged the superior power of Jonadab; he yielded to its control, even when his own sense of right condemned the proposals of his adviser.

Among other inmates of the palace was a young princess named Tamar (*a palm tree*), the full sister of Absalom. She was most beautiful, like her brother; like him too, if we may judge from her name, she was of goodly carriage. As she was still unmarried, she may have been about seventeen years of age, in the perfection of budding womanhood. Though her father was the powerful ruler of Palestine, and her mother the daughter of a Hittite king, she had been accustomed to discharge ordinary household duties in the palace. Her skill in breadmaking was conspicuous. A sick man's disordered fancy might even be excused for imagining no baker in the land able to please the palate so well as she. Amnon was



smitten by the beauty of Tamar. Knowing that a marriage so contrary to the law would never be allowed, and believing, perhaps, that a discovery of his love would alarm David into removing her from the palace, the young man kept his passion hidden in his own breast. But Jonadab, his friend, perceived a secret fire eating at his heart. A confession of the passion was wrung from the prince. With reckless disregard of all law, Jonadab fanned the flame. Guided by his counsels, Amnon, pretending sickness, took to his bed. David, hearing of his eldest son's illness, paid him a visit. He found, as had been previously arranged between the cousins, that the prince would not taste of food. Inquiring what he could do for the invalid, he was asked by Amnon to send Tamar to bake a couple of heart-cakes in his room, and to give them to him with her own hands. David had a fellow-feeling with a sick man's fancies. When a few years older than Amnon, he had taken a similar liking for water from the gate-well of Bethlehem. None else could quench his thirst, and brave men risked their lives to bear away a skin of it for their chief. The unsuspecting king falls into the trap. Tamar is told to repair to Amnon's room. The sick man, unable to bear the presence of strangers, orders every one out: and again the sword of the Avenger descends on David's head in a deed of terrible foulness. Amnon's love has turned into hatred. Abused and dishonoured, Tamar is violently thrust out into the court of the palace by her brother's servant. She is guilty, it seems; the prince is shocked, and innocent. Rending her virgin robe, and defiling her head with ashes, perhaps from the very fire on which she had baked those fatal cakes, she hurries through the court towards the apartments of her brother Absalom. Her hand is lifted to her brow like one in pain; her cries attract the attention of passers-by. Absalom is soon made aware of the blight cast on his sister's young life. He counsels her to conceal the shameful deed. He even affects indifference to the dishonour done to his sister. In his meetings with Amnon there is

never a word said about it, good or bad. David spoke out his anger and sorrow ; but he allowed the criminal to escape. He knew human nature too well not to dread vengeance under that indifference in Absalom's face and manner. For months and years he feared ; for months and years he watched ; when he and others had been thrown off their guard, the careless, easy-going Absalom suddenly startled the world as his sister's avenger.

Two years passed away ; the crime of Amnon seemed to be forgotten ; buried, it might be, among other scandals of the palace. It was spring-time, according to our reckoning ; but the barley was ripe, and the season for sheep-shearing had come. Absalom had a farm at some distance from Jerusalem, called Baal-Hazor (the village-place). As it was not far from Ephraim, it may have been situated among the hills of Benjamin. It was a modest establishment, large enough for its owner's wants, but not for his vanity. Being a young prince of much pretence, a king's son by both father and mother's side, he wishes to act the great man on the occasion of this sheep-shearing. He invites all his brothers to the feast. He even invites the king and the great officers of state. But his father declines the invitation ; the expense will be too great for Absalom's means. He still urges his suit, but in vain. David gives him a blessing, a handsome gift, it may be, to eke out his own resources ; a gift as well as good wishes. But although the king declines for himself, he will not surely keep back Amnon, the heir-apparent, from honouring the feast with his presence. David has fears on the point. He yields at length, and Amnon, with all the grown-up princes of the blood, set out for the merry-making at Baal-Hazor. Absalom possessed the power, not given to many, of firmly attaching to himself the young men who served him. They were ready for any deed he might order. Life itself they made light of, if the throwing of it away should be for their master's good, or if the taking of another's were by his command. They

knew Absalom to be David's favourite son, to whom nothing could be denied, and to whom everything might be forgiven. But that did not attach them to the prince. There was about him an easiness of bearing, a kindliness of manner, a readiness to help, which won the love and the attachment of the lower ranks. He knew his power over the servants when he invited Amnon to his house. He used that power to take the vengeance which he had waited two years for.

A numerous cavalcade of young gallants from Jerusalem arrived at Baal-Hazor for the feast. They and their retinue were all unarmed. Perhaps, indeed, the princes, accustomed to the soft delights of a palace, had not much of their father's courage. Without suspicion they give themselves up to the pleasures of the day. The servants of Absalom are busied here and there in the crowded hall. As the feast wears on, the wine-cup passes freely among the guests. The merriment rises higher every moment. Amnon, entirely at his ease, feels the cheering influence of the wine. Suddenly the voice of Absalom rises above the din of the revelling, 'Smite Amnon !' The servants, who had been waiting for the signal to put him to death, assail the prince with the knives used in carving for the company. The screams of the victim, the cries of the onlookers, proclaim to the waiting men outside the deed of blood which was going on within. One or two of them mount the mules standing near and ride off. They carry to Jerusalem a terrible story : Absalom's servants have murdered all the king's sons, without leaving one. The palace is thrown into confusion. The king rises from his throne, he rends his robes in horror, he casts himself on the ground. His courtiers, standing beside their lord, give way to like expressions of grief. Desolation has swept through the palace ; the sword of the Avenger has again fallen with a crushing blow on David's house. After the first bursts of grief were past, Jonadab, the friend of the murdered prince, ventured to doubt the story. He said Absalom had taken the life of

Amnon only. He speaks indeed as one to whom the tidings were a thing long looked for. He knew the purpose of murder was formed from the day of Tamar's dishonour. And probably for that reason Jonadab had taken care not to put himself in Absalom's power, when his friend Amnon and the other princes accepted the invitation. His words were soon shown to be true. The watcher on the gate-tower reported the coming of much people round the shoulder of Zion, which looks into the western valley. Jonadab, on the outlook for the princes, is the first to carry the tidings to the king. Scarcely had he finished when they burst into the palace. With 'very sore weeping' they bewail their brother's untimely fate. David and his courtiers join in the wail of grief for the dead. A third time has the crime of David, though done in secret, been openly avenged. But for the first time has the sword of the Avenger spilt the blood of his children.

Dissensions in the palace followed the murder of Amnon. Absalom had fled to the court of his grandfather Talmai, king of Geshur, a region then, as it still is, an asylum from which it was difficult to take offenders. Had David chosen to exert his power for the punishment of the criminal, Absalom could not have escaped. But he shrank from shedding the blood of his own son; and if Absalom had fled to Hebron, the manslayer's city of refuge, the law of the land might have defied king or king's son to touch him. But David's wives and children had no such scruples. With one voice they were clamouring for vengeance. While pretending zeal for the law, they were really actuated by another motive. After Amnon's death, Absalom, in their eyes, became heir to the throne. Were he removed, the chance of the crown falling to one of the other sons would be bettered: 'Let us kill him,' they are represented saying, 'let us kill him for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also' (2 Sam. xiv. 7). Perhaps there was another reason. If Absalom ever ascended the throne, his first step might be to rid himself of

every competitor for the crown. David resisted their entreaties, perhaps also their threats. His affection for the outlaw grew stronger every day. He did not even conceal from his counsellors a half-formed purpose of visiting his favourite son at Geshur. For three years these battles went on in the palace. The avengers of blood were demanding the life of the murderer; but, as the blood of Amnon was not shed without cause, the king would not yield to their demand. His domestic happiness was for ever at an end.

A greater danger alarmed the counsellors of the king. The murder of Amnon was not a deed which could be confined within the four walls of the palace. It was done openly before a crowd of spectators, and by men who knew the cause of quarrel between the brothers. In a short time the outrage on Tamar and the death of her ravisher were talked of in Hebrew households. All were aware that Amnon was doubly guilty of death. More heinous crimes than his were seldom committed. No home was safe, no virgin could freely discharge the ordinary duties of life in her father's house, if Amnon escaped unpunished. 'The vain fellows,' 'the fools,' as the debauched and the worthless were called, might soon imitate the example set them by the heir to the crown. Among a people bred to strict regard for law, the avenging of Tamar was considered a sacred duty. Absalom, according to their view of the matter, had done no wrong; the father of the damsel had not discharged his duty; her brother had taken it in hand and carried it through. The majesty of the law had been vindicated by the death of Amnon; the friends and relations of the murdered prince called the slayer a criminal, the people at large counted him a hero. The boldness of the deed, and the tenacity of purpose which it showed, commended the prince to the nation as one worthy to rule over men. It was not therefore in agreement with their views of justice to let Absalom spend year after year in banishment. Murmurs began to rise among the people (2 Sam. xiv. 15). Threats

even seem to have been uttered, if the prince were not recalled from exile. Perhaps, indeed, he was already setting in motion the springs of that discontent which, in a few years, drove David from his capital, and placed Absalom for a time on the throne. Several of the king's council became aware of this state of feeling among the people. But they were also aware of the battles in the king's own household. And however anxious to see Absalom recalled, they shrank from incurring the hostility of the royal family.

At last Joab, aware of the king's own leanings towards his banished son, contrived to put the views of all parties before him without coming forward himself. Unless we consider the danger which Joab ran in moving in the matter, we shall form a poor estimate of the wisdom he showed in accomplishing the prince's recall. The palace was wholly set against the measure. The king himself could not think of bringing back the exile. But Joab knew the king's longing for a reconciliation. He was aware also of the discontent among the people. Without showing his hand in the matter, he got the case laid before the king by a wise woman of Tekoa, who, in a friendly spirit towards David, had the skill to hold up to him a mirror wherein he saw himself and his danger. One day when he sat in the gate dispensing justice, she cast herself on the ground before him, and besought his help. Pretending she was a widow, whose two sons had quarrelled till the one killed the other, she described her woeful plight in defending the survivor from the rest of her kindred. She showed how a desire for the inheritance was masked under zeal for the avenging of blood. Pitying her sorrowful case, for it was the counterpart of his own, he assured her of his protection. Seeing he had not apprehended her meaning, she requested leave to speak further. She then charged him with fault himself in not fetching home his banished. The speeches which she heard among the people were making her afraid. As a loyal subject, she feared the dangers to which these

speeches against the king's government might lead ; for everywhere the Hebrews were regarding Absalom as unjustly cut off 'from the inheritance of God.' 'May Jehovah be with thee,' she said, uttering a prayer, not stating a fact. Before dismissing her, David ascertained that Joab, faithful as he ever was, had contrived this little plot.

Joab conveyed to Geshur the king's permission for Absalom to return from exile.<sup>1</sup> But the prince was forbidden to enter the palace, or to approach his father. He was recalled from exile certainly, but watched like a dangerous neighbour. David had clogged the boon he bestowed on his son with conditions which drained it of nearly all its sweetness. While yielding to the feeling of the people on the one hand by recalling Absalom to Jerusalem, he was, on the other, deferring to the fears, real or pretended, of the rest of his family. For two years the impetuous young man submitted to this shutting out from the honours of his birthright. But his pride could stoop to it no longer. He sent for Joab to speak to him on the subject. Joab refused to come. He sent a second time, and again he met with a refusal. Absalom replied to these slights by ordering his servants to set fire to a barley field belonging to the general. His retainers, as faithful to him then as they had shown themselves five years before, cared for neither high nor low who stood in the way of their master's orders. The field which he told them to burn was beside Absalom's house. The grain, almost ready for the reaper and

<sup>1</sup> Several slight incidents referred to in the course of the history give grounds for the following chronological table :—

B.C. 1035. Rape of Tamar.

March–April, 1033. Murder of Amnon.

„ „ 1030. Recall of Absalom from banishment.

„ „ 1028. Restoration of Absalom to David's favour.

The season of the year (March or April) is determined by the two incidents of sheep-shearing and the burning of the dry and ripened barley in Joab's field.

August–September, 1024. Flight of David from Jerusalem. But the date 1024 B.C. rests on reading four years for forty in 2 Sam. xv. 7—a doubtful emendation. Between Absalom's return to Jerusalem and the fulfilment of his alleged vow in Hebron, four years can scarcely have elapsed.

quite dry under the fierce sun, burst into flame. The fire-raisers did not seek to conceal themselves. In their eagerness to destroy Joab's property, they may have laboured to keep the fire from spreading, as it was likely to do, to other fields. Every one knew that the prince's men had set the barley on fire. Joab feared some more serious annoyance if he still refused to see him. Accordingly he paid Absalom a visit, and demanded the reason of the barley being set on fire. Absalom offered no explanation but the messages he had already sent. He insisted on being restored to his rights. He denied all wrong-doing. He even professed his willingness to die if the king found fault in him. But he was resolved not to live the life of an exile within sight of his father's palace. Conscious that Absalom was right, or afraid to tempt his anger further, Joab promised his good offices. He found the king not unwilling to relent. After five years of estrangement, father and son were again reconciled. But on the side of the prince it was a reconciliation intended only to mask the greater wickedness than Amnon's death, on which he was now setting his heart.

The popularity of Absalom had increased even while he was under a cloud at court. The confidence, with which he appealed to his innocence before Joab, was but a reflection of the verdict long before passed by the people in his favour. The readiness, too, with which the servants obeyed his orders in firing Joab's barley was a proof, not only of his power of securing devoted partisans, but also of a fuller consciousness of that power. During the five years which had passed since his retainers murdered Amnon, Absalom had grown into a manhood that was aware of its own strength, and disposed to use it for its own ends. In his seclusion from public life his servants appear to have kept him informed of the feeling of the people in his favour, of their admiration of his beauty, and of their interest in the events of his daily life. Several petty details are preserved, which show more clearly than



words the feelings and the gossip of the people at this period. A more handsome youth could not be seen in the country. He was the perfection of manly beauty, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head. His children were like their father in this respect; and his daughter, whom he called Tamar, after her unfortunate aunt, but whom the rest of the family called Maachah, after her grandmother, appears to have closely resembled him in beauty of person and in the power of securing the affections of others (2 Chron. xi. 21). Even the luxuriant growth of his hair was published among the vulgar by admiring retainers. They boasted of its woman-like length and weight; they told how he polled it but once a year, and how he surprised his friends by weighing down with it two hundred royal shekels. Had not Absalom been the idol of the tribes of Israel, these things would never have been thought of or talked about. Their very smallness is the best guarantee we could have of his great popularity with all ranks.

Absalom was not long at court before he turned this popularity to account. He knew the nation was not satisfied with his father. The business of the law courts, over which the king himself presided, had become too vast to be attended to by one man. Appeals from inferior judges, and cases brought directly before the king, could not all receive a fair hearing, even though decided in the shorthand ways of Eastern rulers. Unquestionably the loose administration of justice formed a real grievance, of which Absalom was forward to take advantage. But the scandals and intrigues of the palace had also leaked out into the cities and hamlets of Israel. They had damaged the king; they had weakened his hold on the affections of a law-loving people. Absalom in their eyes was the representative of law and custom. He was known to have vindicated the authority of both when the king would not. He was known also to have paid a heavy price for his boldness. Absalom was a hero and a martyr in the people's cause. In their eyes David was a

breaker of the law himself, and a screener of others from its penalties. The people were ignorant of the real character of the prince. They saw only what lay on the surface. But in popular movements it is too often outward show which catches the multitude. Were the outer cloak lifted off from their unworthy idols, the generality of mankind would be the first to raise the axe which should dash those idols in pieces.

The famine of three years' duration, which weakened the kingdom sometime in the latter part of David's reign, fits in exactly with the murmurings of the people at this period. For three seasons the rainfall was short of the requirements of the ground. Dry winters were followed by bad harvests. And among a people accustomed to trust entirely to their own fields for the following year's food, a deficient harvest was the cause of much hardship, while a total failure was ruin to most classes of the community. A three years' famine produced serious discontent among the Hebrews, for the governed always find consolation in attributing their troubles to the incapacity or wickedness of their governors. David was under a cloud with his people for not vindicating the majesty of the law himself; he fell still further in public estimation by punishing the prince who, having next to him the best right to become the law's minister of vengeance, had discharged that duty; and he seemed to his subjects to be under the frown of Jehovah, when the heavens refused their usual rains. Absalom's success in overturning his father's throne is thus more easily explained.<sup>1</sup>

David became alarmed at the long-continued drought.

<sup>1</sup> Among the indications of a probable date for the three years' famine, the death of Saul's sons, and the four battles with the Philistines, are the following (2 Sam. xxi.) :—

(a) They took place before the rebellion of Absalom; for (2 Sam. xxi. 17) David's officers resolved he should not take part in any battle again. Hence they refused to let him command the army against Absalom.

(b) The reproach of Shimei that David was guilty of the blood of Saul's house (2 Sam. xvi. 8) points to something more nearly touching David than the death of Ishbosheth, and more recent.

But a vision of the Avenger's sword may have made him unwilling to repair to that Friend, whom he had been accustomed to consult. However, the cause of the drought was not the wickedness of the palace. It stretched further back. The oath of assembled Israel to protect the temple slaves of Gibeon had been outraged by Saul. For reasons now unknown, he had planned the utter destruction of their city. 'Zeal for Israel' was the cause assigned, the mistaken zeal of a fanatic. As the wilderness tabernacle was removed from Nob to Gibeon, he may have imagined that, in harbouring the priests and the tabernacle, the people of the city were sheltering traitors. But whatever the reason may have been, he purposed putting them all to death.<sup>1</sup> His hand was stayed before his purpose could be accomplished. The murder of the Gibeonites left a blood-stain on the whole kingdom. 'Saul and his house of blood-guiltiness' are given as the ground for punishment falling on the nation. It was slow of foot, it was long in coming, for the generation which does the sin in a country is not always the generation which bears the punishment. But when the scourge did come, it fell on all ranks of men. Between the Gibeonites and the royal household had grown up a blood feud, for which law and custom in those times had only one remedy, 'blood for blood.' Deeply rooted in the national character, this rule was productive sometimes of good, sometimes of evil. It is alien to our manners. We condemn it for the harm it would give rise to, if cherished among ourselves; we overlook the good it may have done among a totally different race. 'Blood for blood' was the demand made by the citizens when their ambassadors received an audience of the king. Atonement must be made; but neither silver nor gold could appease the feud. A sacred duty lay on them to atone for the blood of their slaughtered

<sup>1</sup> Judging from the ordinary law of 'like for like,' we may suppose that he took the lives of seven of them, for as many of the royal family were afterwards slain as an atonement for his crime.

townsmen by the blood of the household, at whose hands it was shed. 'Blood, it defileth the land,' said the law, 'and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein but by the blood of him that shed it' (Num. xxxv. 31-33). Saul had gone to his account; the stain of blood was crying for vengeance on his family, just as the stain of Uriah's blood was resting on David's palace, and claiming victim after victim from among his children. In neither case did the law against punishing the children for their father's sins apparently hold good. In both the father's guilt brought ruin on the sons. An open slaughter of the innocent is visited on Saul by an open demand for the lives of his children; an underhand murder of the innocent is visited on David by the violent end of son after son, all happening in the ordinary course of events, linked together by easily traced causes and effects. But the same hand was directing the government of the world in both cases. How such reflection of punishment from the head of the sinner on to his children consists with the law, that the children are not to be punished for the father's sins, is a question in philosophy which we shall leave alone. But no fact is more clearly written on the face of history, than punishment glancing off from the guilty on to the seemingly innocent, while the law of God distinctly forbids the son to suffer for his father's crime. Men are forbidden to punish the child for the father's sin; does the same rule not hold in the court of heaven and before the throne of God? <sup>1</sup>

To a high-minded man, as David was, the delivering up to death of seven children of the man whom he followed on the throne, could not fail to be a source of bitterest sorrow. Saul's family entertained not the slightest hope of recovering the crown, nor did David stand in fear of their pretensions. They were sunk in poverty and neglect. Neither during Absalom's rebellion nor after it is there a whisper of danger

<sup>1</sup> Compare the facts and views given by Grote, *History of Greece*, viii. pp. 418, 419, in Alexander's massacre of the Branchidæ.

to David from that source. Still, free though he may have been from apprehension, the demand of the Gibeonites for seven sons of Saul to return on them blood for blood, put him in most unhappy straits. Should he say 'No,' he would set at nought one of the most binding laws of Eastern nations. Should he say 'Yes,' there were men in those days, as there are in our own, ready to sneer at the chance so opportunely presented of ridding himself of the seven ablest men of a rival family. Judged by the laws and customs of the land, David could not act otherwise than seize the seven men and hand them over to the Gibeonites, a painful but an unavoidable grief to his great heart. His treatment of Absalom had already put David in disagreement with the cherished customs of his people. Should he set himself against the same customs a second time, especially when three years of drought had terrified the nation with fear of divine vengeance, the crown might be forfeited by his kindness of heart.

The best known of all Saul's kindred was Mephibosheth. But David's league of love with his father Jonathan threw a shield of safety over that helpless prince. Nearest of kin though he was to the shedder of the Gibeonites' blood, him David could not deliver up to death. Other victims were found; two sons of Rizpah, the concubine of Saul, and five sons of his eldest daughter Merab.<sup>1</sup> These seven David handed over to the injured citizens. Solemn and heart-rending it must have been to all present that day, when the inheritors of the father's feud were pierced through with the sword on the hill of Gibeah, their ancestral town. Nailed to crosses or stakes prepared for the occasion, the seven bodies were then raised in the air. From the middle of April to the first droppings of the winter rains in October,

<sup>1</sup> Michal is said to have been their mother. In our version she is said to have 'brought them up,' a rendering scarcely allowable. If Merab died early, and if the care of her children devolved on her sister Michal, the latter might be said to have been their mother. The bringing up of Genubath, not by his mother, but by his aunt, Queen Tahpenes, is a parallel case (1 Kings xi. 20).

the crosses with their ghastly burdens stood out against the sky on the hill-top. But they were not left unguarded. Rizpah, the hapless mother of two of the men, spread a couch of sackcloth on the bare rock, and allowed neither vulture by day nor jackal by night to touch the dead. Her affection became matter of common talk. It penetrated to the palace, and was made known to David. Satisfied, when rain began to fall, that the curse of drought was removed from the land, and touched by the affection of the mother for her dead sons, he ordered the bones of the slain men to be taken down. He could honour the dead, though he could not save the living. Impressed, as every one must have been, with the fate of a family once so powerful, the king showed his sorrow by interring the bones of its scattered members in a common grave. He himself, after bringing the remains of Saul and his three sons from Jabesh, conveyed them to Zelah, a place in the canton of Benjamin, where Saul's fathers were buried. The bones of the seven were carried to the same spot and laid in the same grave.

Absalom saw his opportunity in the growing unpopularity of the king. But he was also urged to action by the change which had come over the gossip of the palace regarding the succession to the throne. Since his flight to Geshur, his brother Solomon had grown to be a boy eight or nine years of age. Bathsheba was known to be chief favourite among David's wives. And the regard with which her child was treated must have revealed to the courtiers David's intention to name him for the throne. Absalom's temper could not brook this affront. He regarded the crown as his by right, for he was David's eldest surviving son. His mother, too, was a king's daughter, while the rest of David's wives were the daughters of commoners. And of Solomon's mother he could say nothing too harsh or too scandalous. His brothers were young men of a small spirit, well enough fitted to engage in the intrigues of a palace, but not to stand comparison

with him, or to cross his purposes. Suspicious of his father's intentions, and determined to wield a king's sceptre, he resolved to bring matters to a speedy issue.

The weakest part in David's government was the administration of justice. As chief judge of the nation, to whom every one was free to bring his suit, the king should have dispensed justice every morning. For some reason he was less mindful of this duty than he ought to have been. Absalom saw the chance presented of ingratiating himself with the people. He laid his plans so as to dazzle the multitude by unwonted magnificence, to catch them by unwonted affability, and to cheat them by an affectation of unwonted attention to business. Early in the morning, even when there may have been suspicious eyes to report his doings, he drove his chariot into the open space of the city gate. Fifty runners preceded him on foot. When he reined in his horses, his retainers stood in advance or round about the chariot. Horses and chariots were new things in Jerusalem, things, too, which were sure to be spoken about. They could not be driven into the public square of the city without drawing together a larger number of onlookers than usual. Among this crowd the servants of Absalom, wholly in their master's interest, worked their way, seeking out all who had cases to bring before the king. Word was passed to the prince, and a servant was sent to ask the suitors to come to his chariot. He kindly inquired of each to what city he belonged, he examined the cause which brought him to Jerusalem, he pronounced it good and right, and then expressed his regret that no one dispensed justice in the king's absence. Overcome by this kindness and magnificence, the man would have prostrated himself before the prince. But Absalom put forth his hand to prevent the obeisance. He did more. He drew the man toward him, and kissed him, as he would have done an equal. Few were able to resist attentions so overpowering. Almost every one who received them spread abroad most

flattering reports of magnificence, of kingly bearing, of gracious condescension. The whole country was ringing with the prince's praise. He had stolen the hearts of the people; he had sapped the foundations of their allegiance to his father. If David was aware of the magnificence affected by Absalom, there was an excuse at hand. The prince had resided for three years in horse-breeding Syria. In his grandfather's dominions, every man of substance had one or more horses: every chief or noble rode in his own chariot. Absalom had become accustomed to this magnificence. He preferred it to riding on mules, or walking on foot, as was usual at his father's court. With an excuse so good, what had the prince to fear from a father so indulgent as David?

Absalom was guided in his schemes by Ahithophel, one of the discontented party at court. Something had evidently happened to give the chief councillor deep offence. His character is drawn in one of the Psalms: 'The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords' (Ps. lv. 21). As Ahithophel's ideas of his own greatness could not brook the smallest slight, an insignificant cause may have led to this great dislike of the king. Because Bathsheba may have been the daughter of his son, Eliam, the wrong done to her former husband, Uriah, is sometimes given as the cause of Ahithophel's quarrel with David. But Bathsheba was David's favourite wife; her son was his destined heir. In assisting Absalom, Ahithophel would thus be wronging his own grand-daughter and her child, if not procuring their death. No connection existed between the murder of Uriah and the discontent of Ahithophel. But whatever may have been the cause, discontented he certainly was, and in these measures of Absalom the hand of Ahithophel may be most surely traced. Another of the leaders on Absalom's side was Amasa, who appears to have been of great influence in the rebel camp. He was the son of Abigail, the sister of Zeruiah, Joab's



mother. Amasa and Joab were thus cousins to each other, and nephews to David. But there seems to have been some stain on the birth of Amasa. His father, Jether, is called in one place an Israelite, in another an Ishmaelite; his mother was a serpent's (Nahash) daughter,—an allusion not to parentage, but to character (Gen. iii. 15), similar to Belial's daughter (1 Sam. i. 16). Amasa does not appear to have held high office in David's court or army. The neglect with which he was treated, combined with his relationship to the royal family, and perhaps with the traditions of his military skill, may have pointed him out to Absalom as a man, whose fidelity might be safely tampered with or easily bribed to a change of government. When the rebellion succeeded, he became commander-in-chief under the new king.

Some time elapsed between Absalom's restoration to favour and the beginning of the rebellion.<sup>1</sup> It cannot have been long, for not a whisper of the conspiracy reached the ears of Joab or any of the king's trusted advisers. And yet the rebels had formed a party in almost every quarter. As soon as things were ready for the rising, Absalom requested leave of his father to visit Hebron in pursuance of a vow which he uttered when in exile. As his restoration to favour was to be followed by paying this vow, the interval cannot have been very many weeks. And the deceiver adopted the surest plan to allay suspicion. A new-blown zeal for the law screens the villany he is meditating; nor could David have refused permission without injuring himself still more in public estimation. But instead of suspecting any evil, David was overjoyed at the appearance of a regard for religion in this request. He not only gave him leave to go, but he allowed him to invite to the feast at Hebron two hundred men of Jerusalem. They

<sup>1</sup> 'At the end of forty years,' 2 Sam. xv. 7. It is most difficult to account for forty years in this passage. 'Four years' or 'forty days' are no improvement, for the former is too long and the latter too short an interval for fulfilling the vow and perfecting the treason. 'Forty weeks' would solve all difficulties.

had no knowledge of the design on foot. But they gave Absalom the appearance of a large following as he passed through the country. His partisans, too, were encouraged by the sight of numbers; for in all revolutions an apparent majority secures the support of waverers.<sup>1</sup> While they were on the way to Hebron, Absalom's messengers were hurrying to all quarters, warning the disaffected to be ready for the rising. With such skill was the rebellion planned, that Absalom was celebrating his coronation feast, and in every tribe the beginning of his reign had been proclaimed by sound of trumpet, before David knew of the rebellion. And with such celerity did things move forward, that Absalom, with an overwhelming force, was within a day's march of the capital before the king had taken thought of defence. Ahithophel's counsels guided the arms of the rebel. That crafty adviser left the court of David before Absalom. He repaired to his own city of Giloh, a place situated among the mountains of Judah, several miles south of Hebron. He was thus within easy call of the prince.

Jerusalem was no longer a safe residence for David. Discontent was rampant there as well as everywhere else. But besides, the army of Absalom rendered a defence of the town impossible. If David and those who continued faithful to him remained in it, treachery within, and an assault from without, would speedily terminate the civil war. The only hope of safety was to delay till it should be seen who remained loyal. Orders were accordingly issued for withdrawing from Jerusalem the soldiers who favoured the king. His wives and children, with the exception of ten concubines who remained to look after the palace, set out mostly on foot. Everything had to be done in haste. Mules could not even be found to ride on. They halted for a little, at a place called 'the House of the Distance,'<sup>2</sup> on the declivity leading down to

<sup>1</sup> For the vow and the feast, see above, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> Some take this to have been the last house of the city. It may be the boundary line between Judah and Benjamin. See Josh. xviii. 16.

the brook Kedron, while the king passed in review the soldiers who remained faithful. He stood near the ark which Zadok and Abiathar with the Levites had borne out from the city. The retreat was led by a body of men called David's own servants; then the bodyguard of Cherethites and Pelethites passed before him; then the Gittites, commanded by Ittai. David called that captain from the ranks, and urged him to return. It was not right to expose a stranger to the dangers of civil strife. But Ittai refused. He had cast in his lot with his friend, and whatever might be that friend's fate would be his also. 'Go,' the king said, 'pass over,' and the strangers with their wives and little ones, descending the hill, crossed the Kedron. David's words to Ittai, 'grace and truth,' were a proverb of which the origin can be traced.<sup>1</sup> They are found for the first time in the *passing by* of Jehovah witnessed by Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 6). Ittai was told to *pass by* almost the next time they occur in history (2 Sam. xv. 20). Between these two passages the relationship is both singular and close; and the proverb reappears in John i. 14, 'full of grace and truth.' But sometimes only the half of it is found, 'full of grace.' This splitting of a whole phrase into its two halves we shall find occurring in another case from the Pentateuch.

The direction of David's flight had been agreed on in a hurried council as soon as the revolt became known. Fortunately the safest road to escape immediate danger was also the surest for gaining the help of friendly swords. By taking a north-east direction, David would be on the way to the ferries of the Jordan, which afforded communication with the land of Gilead on the east bank. Arrived there, he would be in comparative safety. Of all the tribes of Israel, those on the east side of Jordan had most cause to be grateful to David. From Syrians, from Ammonites, from Moabites, he had given them complete deliverance. While they enjoyed the riches of

<sup>1</sup> The whole proverb occurs once in Joshua, twice in Samuel, frequently in the Psalms, four times in Proverbs, and once in Hosea.

their own country, they had a large share of the riches arising from the traffic of their neighbours with foreign nations. Should the strong hand of David be lifted from the necks of these prostrate foes, Gilead and the adjacent districts would speedily be wasted with fire and sword. If, therefore, the king could count on finding friends in any place, it was certain to be in Gilead. And nowhere had he a better chance of being joined by veteran soldiers. The garrisons of Damascus, of Syria, of Ammon, of Moab, and of Edom, could all be easily communicated with. It was wise to choose Gilead as a place of refuge. The king had also recovered from the stupor of his first grief. He was beginning to see more clearly in the darkness. Zadok and Abiathar might be of service to him by remaining in the city: they could be of none by accompanying him in his flight. Disguising his real meaning, he told Zadok to carry back the ark of God to Zion, adding, if it were God's will, he should see it again. The high priest or any of the Levites near him might report these words to Absalom without fear. But Zadok did not apprehend the object of sending him back. 'Art thou not a seer?' the king said privately. It was an old-fashioned word, that had been out of use for a generation. It sharpened Zadok's thinking. And then, David told him to send his own son and Abiathar's with such news as they might gather of Absalom's plans. The brave priests, both of them thoroughly devoted to the king, were the best men to trust with this dangerous duty.

If Jerusalem could have been held against the rebel army, sound policy would have forbidden Joab to abandon a place of its importance. A soldier who surrenders a stronghold to the enemy, without even striking a blow in its defence, is guilty of treason. But the first thought of David and Joab, the greatest soldiers of the day, is flight. They forsake Jerusalem, before which the rebels might have been delayed till they grew weary of the enterprise, or till dissension broke out in their ranks. A military blunder so serious

cannot be attributed to these experienced soldiers. Jerusalem was not fortified. The works were in progress then and for years afterwards. But they could not resist an immense host such as accompanied Absalom. The truth of this is put beyond doubt by the prayer of David in Psalm li.: 'Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.' A few months before that psalm was written, Joab and the Hebrew army made a narrow escape from destruction in battle with the Syrians and Ammonites. Had they been defeated, Jerusalem might have shared the fate which overtook Rabbath-Ammon. David had fallen into grievous sin; punishment was coming when he wrote the psalm. Anticipating a scare such as he and his people formerly felt in the crisis of the war with Ammon, he prays: 'Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.'

The departure of the king was an event long remembered, from several of the incidents by which it was attended. As the multitude filed out of the city, the valley of the Kedron and the sides of the neighbouring hills sent forth a wail of sorrow: 'All the country wept with a loud voice.' Citizens, who crowded forth to witness the leave-taking, or followed the retiring soldiers, helped to swell that cry of grief. David himself, covering his head in token of bitter sorrow, and walking on his bare feet, joined in the weeping as he climbed the ascent of Olivet. His captains and soldiers, with Eastern openness of feeling, also covered their heads and wept aloud. It was the weeping of strong men, for every one of whose tears there should run streams of rebel blood. Meanwhile, rays of hope begin to streak the darkness. While he is thus plunged in grief, a messenger, perhaps one of the two hundred who accompanied the prince to Hebron, arrives with tidings that Ahithophel, the king's sagest counsellor, has proved false. 'Mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance,' wrote David, 'we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company' (Ps. lv. 13). 'O Lord,' he said, 'turn

the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.' He had then reached the top of Olivet. While he was praying,<sup>1</sup> David's friend Hushai arrives from the other side of the hill. His clothes are rent, earth is on his head. Well was it for both David and him that he was not one of the two hundred, whom Absalom contrived to put out of the way. He had been residing on his own estate in the north of Benjamin, and he was then on his road to the capital to share the fortunes of his friend. But since Hushai could do better service as a traitor in the council of the rebel prince than as a friend, uselessly to cumber the little army in the field, David urged him to proceed to Zion, and put himself in communication with the high priests should he discover anything of importance. He might thus defeat the plans of Ahithophel, while seeming himself to serve Absalom. The two friends then parted, the one descending the western side of Olivet towards the city, the other slowly passing down the northern slope towards the wilderness ferries of Jordan.

Shortly after parting from Hushai, the king's forces met Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth. He had a couple of asses with him, laden with 200 rounds of bread, 100 bunches of raisins, 100 of summer fruits, and a skin of wine. David's suspicions were awakened. Ziba seemed to him on the way to pay court to the new king. But when he asked him, shortly and sharply, What meanest thou by these? Ziba was ready with an answer which went to the king's heart. The asses were for the women and children to ride on, the food for the soldiers, and the wine for those to drink who might faint in the weary wilderness. Faithfulness exists somewhere, the king thought as he heard these cunning words. Ziba's present was a ray of hope in the gloom. But, he asked, where is thy

<sup>1</sup> David is generally thought to have worshipped at a chapel or high place on the top of Olivet. But there is no ground for this in the words: 'When David was come to the top of the hill, where he prayed to God' (2 Sam. xv. 32) against Ahithophel (in ver. 31). Our version has put *worshipped* for *prayed* (see Ex. xi. 8; 1 Sam. ii. 36, i. 28).

master's son? 'At Jerusalem,' was the answer, 'for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore to me the kingdom of my father.' It was a falsehood. Probably it was as true as the story of the bread and the fruit and the wine. Unfortunately, David believed it. And he acted on his belief: 'Thine,' he said, 'is everything which was Mephibosheth's.' Astonished at the turn things had taken, Ziba is master enough of himself to reply: 'I humbly beseech thee, let me find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.' David's rash faith in this deceiver, and his still hastier words, reflect disgrace on his treatment of the slandered cripple, the son of his friend. As David journeyed onward he came to a place in Benjamin called Bahurim, the residence of two men,—one a bitter foe, the other a true friend of the king. Since the latter was from home, and his wife was keeping the house, we can scarcely be wrong in identifying him with Azmaveth, one of the Mighties (2 Sam. xxiii. 31) who was afterwards placed over the king's stores or treasures (1 Chron. xxvii. 25). The other was Shimei, a man connected with Saul's family, and of much influence in the neighbourhood. He was also on friendly terms with Ziba, who lived at no great distance,—an intimacy which may be regarded as another proof of the hollowness of Ziba's professions of loyalty. Shimei came out to view the fugitives. A ravine separated the height on which he stood from the ridge along which they were marching. When David appeared on the one hill, Shimei was seen on the other. With curses loudly spoken he railed on the king as a wicked man, guilty of the blood of Saul's house. He even threw stones and earth at David, harmless it may be at the distance, but annoying to men of spirit. This continued for some time, as Shimei moved in the direction of their march. David seemed unwilling to act a king's part. His captains, who were gathered round him, forbore to speak. At last Abishai angrily requested leave to cross the ravine and take off that dead dog's head. Joab urged David to comply. Had Ittai or Benaiah made the

request, he might not have met with a refusal. But Abishai was one of those, who put it in the power of Shimei to curse David as a shedder of the blood of Saul's house. The bloody end of Abner, and the equally bloody end of Ishbosheth to which it led, rushed at once into the king's thoughts. An indignant reproof silenced the two brothers: 'What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.' It was a more severe punishment to Shimei to let him alone than to take his life. He was treated with contempt. He was allowed to curse on and to throw stones till he was weary. He made himself a fool before the chief men of the kingdom, without the smallest good to himself or to the rebel cause. From that day onward he knew there could be no terms of friendship between him and David. For a half-hour's indulgence in silly cursing and stone-throwing, his conscience would henceforth never cease to frighten him with a Runner's sword. But the providential sparing of Shimei's life probably led to Ahithophel's death.

Meanwhile the rebel army was approaching the capital. Attended by men from every quarter, Absalom and Ahithophel were reaping the fruits of successful treason in their triumphant march towards Zion. Nor was the success in Jerusalem less soothing to their pride. Zadok and Abiathar, the chiefs of the national faith, are in the power of the new king, if they do not mean to serve him. Hushai the Archite, the friend of David, presents himself at the palace to pay allegiance. 'God save the king' were his words of homage. Staggered by Hushai's baseness, Absalom, half in doubt, half in contempt, asked, 'Is this thy kindness to thy friend?' Whatever generosity was left in Absalom's bosom was ruffled. But Hushai deftly parried the thrust. Nothing but skilful flattery could save him from ruin. Smoothly and readily came the excuse to Hushai's lips: 'Whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be,



and with him will I abide.' Absalom's head was turned by his success. In that short interview Hushai saw, how he might best manage matters by sailing with the stream of the prince's own high thoughts. Whatever seemed to exalt the young man would be preferred to sager counsel, if less skilfully proposed. Ahithophel, carried away by the credit due to successful management, would be less obsequious when it came to a battle of wits. His first proposal fell in with the prince's humour, and was followed on the day of their entry into Zion. The ten concubines left by David in charge of the palace, Absalom took as concubines to himself. It was the custom in the East for the successor of a king to claim the wives and concubines he had left behind (2 Sam. xii. 8). Absalom, by taking these ten women to be his concubines, avowed his resolution not to stop in his career till he had hunted his father to death. It was a barrier in the way of peace which could not be removed. Henceforth there could be no truce in the civil war.

So long as David lived, Absalom's success was not assured, and Ahithophel was not safe. Conscious of his danger, the chief counsellor proposed to finish the war at a blow that night. The road David had taken was well known. Shimei could be in Zion as soon as Absalom. He knew the direction of David's flight, the number of soldiers with him, the host of women and children who cumbered their march; and he could boast of their want of spirit. Ahithophel saw the necessity of surprising David that night, scattering his troops, and killing the king himself. Shimei's story showed how easily the thing could be done. And Ahithophel was not slow to offer his services for this purpose. Asking twelve thousand men from Absalom, —a thousand from each tribe (Num. xxxi. 4),—he offered, with their help, to overtake the fugitives and destroy David. The prince and his chiefs closed with the offer. Ahithophel appears, indeed, to have left the cabinet for the purpose of selecting the soldiers. But the military chiefs took the

matter to heart after he withdrew. The cunning counsellor was leaving nothing for the young prince to do but to obey. All the glory was going to Ahithophel; no room was left for a display of Absalom's vanity or his general's prowess. Ahithophel was setting himself up as king-maker. He was treating Absalom as a puppet, to be moved when and where he pleased. Fear and dislike, however they may have been planted in the prince, turned his thoughts towards the courtly Hushai. Before it is too late, Absalom orders Hushai to be summoned. He informs him of the plan which the council had sanctioned; then, dislike or doubt cropping out, 'Shall we do after his saying?' he asks; 'if not, speak thou.' Hushai saw in these words the cloud under which Ahithophel had passed. David's life was then hanging by a thread; for the carrying out of Ahithophel's counsel meant success to the rebellion. But with a voice and countenance trained to composure, Hushai pointed out the dangers of a night attack against warriors accustomed to campaigning. They would not wait to be attacked, as Ahithophel imagined. Their watches would be set far out. At the first clash of arms the raw soldiers of the prince, hearing their shouts, would lose heart. They would immediately run, and would spread reports of an overthrow. A defeat would be fatal to the new king; his forces would melt away as fast as they had assembled. After exciting the prince's fears, he touched his vanity. 'Gather all Israel,' he said, 'take the command, and in royal state sweep from the earth the paltry few who dare to defy thy greatness.' Hushai's proposal was greeted with applause. 'If he betake himself to a city, let all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it to the brink of the ravine and topple it over, so that not even a pebble shall be left.' Hushai knew he was speaking foolishness. Only a well-trained voice could have gone on, without faltering, from beginning to end of a proposal so incredibly senseless. But it pleased the prince; it pleased Amasa and the chiefs in the army; it displeased no one but

the king-maker. Ahithophel's plan was set aside, and the orders he may have given were countermanded. But Hushai did not wait to see the result. His own proposal was unsuited to the case of Absalom; he could not believe it would be followed. If Ahithophel's were acted on, nothing could save the royalists from destruction before morning. On leaving the council chamber, Hushai repaired to the tabernacle, the least suspected place in the city. That he should meet Zadok or Abiathar there was also above suspicion. But, in that apparently casual meeting, he made known the design that was on foot. A serving woman was instantly despatched to En-rogel, a well outside the walls, where the women of the city washed their clothes then as now. Ahimaaz and Jonathan, the high priests' sons, were waiting near. The maid communicated to them her message. Less careful than they might have been, the young men instantly started at runners' speed for the king's camp.

The two spies had not proceeded far on their way when they were seen by one of Absalom's followers. Their persons were well known; their running betrayed their errand. Before they had got as far from En-rogel as that place is from Zion, they saw horsemen toiling up the hill in pursuit. Fortunately the spies had a friend in Bahurim, to whose house they ran for safety. His wife was at home. With a woman's quickness she hid them in a bottle-shaped well or corn-pit, which happened to be in the house-court, threw a covering over it, and spread peeled barley above. Owing to the hilly ground, the pursuers had lost sight of the runners. On reaching the house they found the woman in the court grinding barley for family use. When asked about the two runners, she says she saw them, but they had gone over the brook of water. If the pursuers stopped to search the house, and if the woman's story were true, the runners would have so much the more time to escape. And when Absalom's men did cross the brook and search in vain on the other side, the

woman would have cause to triumph by twitting them with their loss of time at the crisis of the chase. When they were out of sight on the road back to Jerusalem, the runners left their hiding-place and hastened to report to David the plan of Ahithophel. The king and his captains saw the danger of their position. With all haste they set themselves to place the Jordan between them and the enemy. By daybreak not one of the fugitives was on the western side of the river. The tide had at last turned in David's favour. The same morning, which witnessed David's army safe across the Jordan, saw Ahithophel riding forth from Jerusalem. In the acceptance by Absalom of Hushai's policy, he read the ruin of the rebel cause. Chagrined, too, at finding himself thrust down to the second place, Ahithophel preferred death to the disgrace of being again humbled in council, and to the certainty of being called to account for his treason. He reached his own city of Giloh; he set his affairs in order, and then hanged himself in his own house. The anointing of the rebel chief by the high priests followed immediately after.

Meanwhile David had reached Mahanaim, a well-known city of Gilead, situated among the rich fields of the granary of Syria. Friends from all quarters gathered round him. Of his immediate helpers, three are specially mentioned, Barzillai, Shobi, and Machir. They stocked the palace at Mahanaim with everything fitted to promote the comfort of the women, children, and soldiers who accompanied the king. A long and toilsome journey lay before the fugitives after crossing the Jordan. On both sides of the river the air was fiercely hot. But the kindness of these great men supplied all the necessities and many of the comforts of life when they reached the city. Nor is this kindness the only outstanding feature in the matter. Shobi was a son of Nahash, and dwelt in Rabbath-Ammon. He may have been viceroy of the conquered country. Machir was the kindly noble who sheltered Mephibosheth till David took him into favour.

He was now paying back that kindness by favours, which might have made David blush for his injustice to the poor cripple on the previous day. The language used regarding the three nobles shows they displayed a genuine outpouring of affectionate regard for David, not obedience to a command they dared not disobey. But other friends soon hastened to the king's standard. Old soldiers whom he had often led to battle flocked to his court as the only centre of hope for the land. The palace of Ishbosheth, which may have been occupied by David during these months of exile, was guarded by an army of twenty thousand trusty men,<sup>1</sup> before Absalom had gathered all Israel and got ready the ropes which were to pull the city to the neighbouring stream. Arranged in companies and divisions, all under leaders of tried skill, they waited for the storm to burst from the other side of Jordan.

Amasa lost no time in gathering his levies. From the rapidity of the rebel movements and the forwardness of their preparations, David considered him to be possessed of powers of organizing an army in no way inferior to Joab's. When tidings arrived of the rebels' approach, so high was the spirit of the royal troops that they marched to meet the enemy, instead of waiting to receive their attack behind the city walls. David himself wished to lead the army. As his life and crown were the prizes of battle, it did not become him to shrink from danger. But all his advisers opposed the step. Even the soldiers entreated him not to leave the city. Between David and his men there was the affection inspired by mutual regard, by common hardships, and by a common

<sup>1</sup> This estimate may be accepted as a fair guess, for—

(1) The army or the chiefs said that the enemy would count the king's life equal to or rather more than the lives of half their whole number (2 Sam. xviii. 3); and

(2) They immediately add that he was equal to ten thousand soldiers.

(3) The number of rebels who appear to have fallen *by the sword* in the battle which followed was twenty thousand (xviii. 7), a number sufficiently striking to affect the imagination of the royalists, as if each loyal sword had taken the life of a rebel.

cause. His leadership was firmly declined. All would fight with stouter hearts if they knew he were in a place of safety, and if they were free from the confusion which might arise from his hurt or death. And the chiefs had not forgotten the risk run by David not long before in the war with the Philistines, nor their vow that he should never be allowed again to expose himself in the field. With one voice they insisted on leaving him behind in Mahanaim. A sufficiently strong plea for this arrangement was soon found. 'Stay with the reserves in the city,' some one, with pardonable craft, proposed to the king; 'bring them up if we require help, and pluck the glory of victory by deciding the battle.' David found himself compelled to remain as commander of the garrison. The three brigades into which the royal army was divided were commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. As they marched past the king in the city gate, soldiers and people heard his charge to these officers, 'Be gentle for me with the young man, with Absalom.'

The place chosen by Joab as a battlefield was near enough to be reached by David with fresh troops, to retrieve a lost day or to save a beaten army from destruction. Others also besides the general had studied the ground, and knew the roads from it. Among these was the runner, Ahimaaz. The scene of battle was known as Ephraim's Wood, evidently from the Ephraimites who perished in the war with Jephthah a century or two earlier. Two roads led to Mahanaim, one through a plain girt about by hills, and another across the rugged ground at their feet. Absalom might take either or both of these roads. As his forces were largely drawn from the tribes which acknowledged the authority of Ishbosheth, when that prince reigned in Mahanaim, there were not a few in the army competent to direct its movements. Reliance on these guides may have misled both Absalom and Amasa. Joab and his fellow-chiefs deemed it safest to meet the storm of war near the junction of the two roads. While their rear

was thus comparatively safe, for the reserves under David rendered it dangerous for the rebels to throw themselves between Joab and the city, their position on the foot-hills gave them an advantage over an undisciplined rabble. The broken ground, on which they seem to have been drawn up, enabled their small front to face a superior force. Right before their position the road northward stretched through a wood of oaks, tamarisks, and other trees. Gently rising heights, wholly free from timber, and open glades of surpassing richness, here and there offered an easy line of march to the rebel army; but in most places the road was so broken up by watercourses and ravines, that the passage into easier ground beyond would weaken the spirit of a mere militia unaccustomed to the hardships of war. Plunging into a steep glen, then slowly climbing the opposite bank, then toiling for a short distance through the underwood of the forest, and repeating this sort of march for hours, the troops of Absalom, weary and broken, were slowly nearing the ambush at the outlet from the wood, where their veteran foes were posted.<sup>1</sup>

As the rebel army did not expect to meet the enemy outside the city, no precaution was taken against surprise. Absalom and Amasa may have thought the royal forces afraid to face them in the field. But when the leading ranks of the rebels cleared the wood where the hill path left the plain, an unpleasant meeting awaited them. The holiday march of these dreamers of triumph was at once stained with blood. A brisk attack from the skilled and fresh soldiers of Joab threw their ranks into confusion. Their prince, unprepared for battle, without his helmet and riding among the advanced

<sup>1</sup> 'Rising, as the country does, suddenly from the deep valley of the Jordan, it is naturally, along its whole western border, deeply furrowed by the many streams which drain the district; and our ride was up and down concealed glens which we only perceived when on their brink, and, mounting from which, on the other side, a short canter soon brought us to the edge of the next.'—*Tristram*, p. 462.

troops on the king's<sup>1</sup> mule, the symbol of a king's peaceful progress, had not even time to seize his arms. The wearied rebels, footsore, broken, and panic-struck, are driven back into the wood. There is no battle; there is ruin on all hands, confusion, flight, and death. Not a moment is given to them to rally. The very evil came on the mighty host, which Hushai described so well when he counselled Absalom not to risk a night attack on David's camp: 'When some of them be overthrown at the first, whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom; and he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt.' At the first clash of arms Absalom hurried to the rear through the wood. The prince was not fleeing from the enemy. He had shown courage too often before to allow us to take this view of his conduct. He seems to have been carelessly riding in front when his men fell into the ambuscade of Joab. By chance 'he was met by the servants of David.' Unpardonable carelessness he was certainly guilty of, but there is nothing in his conduct to warrant a charge of cowardice. Though within a few miles of the enemy, he has neither guards around him nor trusty servants at his side. He counted himself as safe as if he were making a royal progress through a friendly canton. The horses and chariots which he paraded in Zion, and which he would not exchange for a mule's back on the field of battle, are not at hand. The faithful servants, who had shown themselves ready to die for him under less favourable circumstances, sink out of sight as if they had never existed. Manifestly the vainglorious prince was snared to his fate by the belief, that David's veterans would not meet his rope-drawing rabble in the field. Turning the mule's head, the scared prince hurried to the rear. He was hasting to gain his chariot and his guards and his captains. But he was not destined to reach that shelter. As he swept in headlong riding under a branch-

<sup>1</sup> 'Riding upon the mule,' 2 Sam. xviii. 9.



ing oak, similar to many still met with in that region, his head was entangled in the drooping boughs, while his long hair, flying behind him from the hardness of the pace, was whirled round and twisted amid the foliage.<sup>1</sup> The mule galloped from below him, itself frightened by the sounds of war behind. The reins fell from the grasp of the stunned rider. Absalom was left hanging, snared by his own beautiful and vaunted locks. He was unarmed. He had no sword to cut the hair rope or saw the branch and let himself to the ground. He may also have been at first too much stunned by the suddenness of the shock to think of freeing himself with his own hands. He was hanging a helpless prize to the first pursuer who reached the spot. He was long in being discovered. Not unlikely he had wisely determined to sweep at some distance round the flank of his own soldiers as the surest way of reaching his guards, without causing alarm among the troops as they entered the battle. And there he swung midway between heaven and earth, the unworthy receiver of a nation's love. He had been careless of the lives trusted to him; the same carelessness was costing him his own. If Joab's swordsmen did not come to end his misery, he might hang from that tree till, in fulfilment of a Hebrew proverb, the ravens of the valley plucked out his eyes; and hunger, with slow and painful steps, wasted his handsome body.

Meanwhile the swords of the royalists and the fears of the rebels had converted the first flight of a few into a headlong rout of the whole army. Absalom was not at hand to direct his officers or cheer his men. The idea that he had fallen in the first passage of arms or been taken prisoner, if it once gained ground, would undo all the bonds that held the army together. Amasa and every chief under him would feel their power gone. The want of Absalom at the crisis of battle

<sup>1</sup> 'As I rode under a grand old oak tree, I, too, lost my hat and turban, which were caught by a bough.'—*Tristram*, p. 463.

relieved them of the disgrace of defeat and the responsibility of command. The panic grew as tidings of the foe passed to the rear. Only the presence of Absalom could check its progress, and steady the ranks of the rebels. A great unwieldy host, unaccustomed to act together, and wearied with a toilsome march, is suddenly assailed by a compact body of veterans springing on them from ambush, whom they imagined too terrified to venture beyond the city walls. From the height of confidence these raw troops pass at once to the depths of despair. Their leader, the only common bond they had, suddenly disappears. All is lost almost before a blow has been struck. Driven back on the treacherous wood which they have just left, the fugitives find worse enemies in its marshes and ravines than in the swords of the enemy. Twenty thousand fell before the veterans; a larger number were trodden to death by their comrades, or met a worse end from accidents or wounds and from want of food and water among the ravines of the wood.

The oak in which the prince was snared, while this slaughter lasted, seems to have been off his soldiers' line of flight. For some time none of the pursuers approached the spot. At last one of them, roaming about, a mere straggler it would seem, recognised the rebel chief. He might have slain him secretly, but having heard the king's orders to spare the young man's life, he hurried off to report the discovery to Joab. A considerable time elapsed, but no other came near the oak, and Absalom remained fast fixed among the branches. Joab was angry with the soldier for not killing the rebel on the spot; for the death of Absalom was the surest means of crushing the rebellion. And a fear, lest he may have disentangled himself and escaped, made Joab both bitter and hasty in dealing with the discoverer of the prince. Ten silver pieces and a girdle would have been the reward had the soldier thrust him through where he was hanging. But the man bluntly told Joab that a thousand pieces in his hand

would not have persuaded him to disobey the commands of the king. And he added, with the boldness of a free-born soldier, that had he done as Joab wished, Joab himself would have been the first to accuse him to the king. In the words which passed between the soldier and the general, we see most clearly the regard entertained by the army for David, and the contempt with which they judged the proceedings of Joab. But there was not time to discuss the matter. Absalom might escape, and the fruits of the victory be lost. Hastily snatching up three pointed rods, and summoning ten of his bodyguard, Joab hurried towards the oak. From the rudeness of the weapons thus hastily seized, we must infer that the Hebrew general was unarmed; a strong proof of the security he felt in the want of enterprise on the part of Absalom and his officers, and an equally strong proof of the importance he attached to his office as commander-in-chief. The prince was still hanging from the tree. On coming up, Joab at once struck him. But though the rods were thrust into his body, the strokes were not mortal. The ten guardsmen standing round gashed the living, writhing form with numerous wounds. Their chief had set the example. Such excitement as might arise from the greatness of the consequences that must follow the deed, and from the consciousness that he was openly defying the king, unsteadied the hand of Joab; excitement caused the guardsmen to deal these barbarous wounds. But the story of the prince's capture had spread among the royal troops. Many were running towards the spot. Soon a great crowd gathered round the oak, witnesses of the guardsmen's butchery. A few stood at a distance, hanging on the outskirts of the crowd, and knowing something of what was passing. Unable to prevent a breach of the king's orders, they kept themselves aloof from a deed in which they could take no part.

As soon as the prince was dead, Joab saw the time was come to stop the carnage and the pursuit. The rebellion expired

with Absalom's last breath. Every drop of blood shed afterwards would only delay the return of David to Jerusalem. As Joab turned away from the scene of the prince's butchery to stop further bloodshed, one of the men on the outskirts of the crowd requested leave to run to the city with tidings. It was Ahimaaz, the son of the high priest Zadok. A request so reasonable, preferred by a man of standing, could not well be denied. But as the king's son was dead, Joab refused leave. Feeling that the story of Absalom's death was too revolting to be detailed to the king, he preferred to send tidings of the battle by one of his own creatures. The Cushite, apparently a negro servant of the Hebrew general, seemed better fitted for the mission. 'Go, tell what thou hast seen,' were the orders given in public, whatever else may have been said in private. The Cushite, proud of the honour, bowed low to his master, and hurried, by the shorter but more difficult road across the hills, towards Mahanaim.

Meanwhile the trumpets had sounded to stop fighting. The royal troops, returning from the pursuit, were mustering round the mangled body of Absalom. A great pit, used it may be by the country people for snaring game or wild beasts, was discovered not far off. The dead body was dragged thither and thrown in. A huge cairn of stones was then raised over the grave by the victorious troops, to mark the spot as a place which should be shunned or spat on by passers-by in all time coming. No such memorial did the vain prince hope to leave as a remembrance of his greatness. His sons had all died in infancy. In a transport of grief at their loss, he spoke as if he were doomed to go down childless to the grave; he bewailed his want of a remembrance among posterity. The dead stone of a lordly monument might supply in some measure the loss of living representatives. The King's Dale, near Jerusalem, the resort of the citizens of Zion, furnished a fitting site for the memorial; the pillars, the pyramids, the tombs of Egypt, furnished examples to

imitate. Accordingly he built a pillar or tomb, known in Jerusalem as Absalom's Hand. The cairn may still exist in Gilead; but the Hand of Absalom, though spared by David on his return from Mahanaim, has long since been swept away.

While the army was thus engaged, Ahimaaz again urged Joab to grant him leave to bear tidings to the king. The general, unwilling to comply, but conscious that he had sent an unworthy messenger, endeavoured to dissuade the young priest. But Ahimaaz still entreated permission, as if he either were a favourite of the general, or had been appointed the king's runner. Twice was his prayer refused; another was sent in his stead; but he persisted in his request. At last he receives permission: Joab bids him 'run.' There had been a purpose in these repeated requests. Ahimaaz knew he could outrun the Cushite. Instead of taking the shorter and more difficult hill path, Ahimaaz turned towards the longer but easier route by the plain. Meanwhile David was expecting tidings from the army. He knew the time when the armies would meet, a clear proof of nearness to the wood of Ephraim. Seated between the two gates that fronted the quarter in which a runner would first be seen, David was ready to send succour or to cover a retreat. At the coming of the king, a watchman went up to the top of the gate above the spot where he was sitting. Suddenly his voice broke the stillness, 'A man running alone.' 'He has tidings, then,' the king remarked to his retinue, and rising, repaired to the gate which the man was approaching. 'Another man running alone,' exclaimed the sentry from the tower, directing his words towards the gate,<sup>1</sup> which the king had then reached. 'He also bringeth tidings,' were the words in which David concealed his fears on hearing of another runner. A single runner could only be a messenger, whether of good or of evil.

<sup>1</sup> 'To the porter' in our version, a pointing of the Hebrew which it is agreed by the best commentators to discard. 'To the gate' is the correct rendering.

But two runners, following close on each other, might be urgent and more urgent messengers for help, or might be the first fugitives from a broken army. As the first runner came on apace, the watcher recognised his stride and figure as those of Ahimaaz. The name was a welcome relief to David when called out by the sentry. 'He is a good man,' he said, 'and cometh with good tidings.' Adonijah, now his eldest son, appears to have been at his side and heard the words. He treasured them in his heart and copied them on a future day. The face of the runner, as he drew near, showed the nature of his message. His breathless eagerness allows him to utter but one word in answer to the still more eager looks of David's retinue: 'Peace,' he cried. That one word revealed the result of the battle. He was too much overcome by his exertions to add a word of respect or explanation. Touching the ground with his forehead in token of homage, he communicated his tidings to the king with a solemnity befitting his standing as an heir to the high-priesthood: 'Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.'

Assured of the result, David's first thought was for the safety of Absalom. A higher motive than a father's fondness prompted the question, 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' But Ahimaaz could not or would not tell. He had hung on the skirts of the crowd that gathered round the tree when the ten guardsmen cut down the prince. He had heard the shouting, and perhaps suspected what was on foot; but he prefers to let Joab tell his own tale of blood. Meanwhile the Cushite is nearing the gate. Ahimaaz is bidden stand aside among the king's retinue. The negro runner arrives. With the eagerness of one new to the honour of bearing despatches, he calls out, 'Tidings, my lord the king.' Ahimaaz, with the easy courtesy of a high-bred noble, had heralded his news with the ordinary salutation, 'Peace.' But the Cushite is proud of his office: 'The Lord hath avenged thee this day of

all them that rose up against thee.' Again David's fears come to the surface; his first inquiry at Cush is for the safety of Absalom. 'The enemies of my lord the king be as that young man is,' was the answer of the runner.

'Much moved' was David at the words. Tears flowed down his cheeks; with heavy sobbing he went up to the guards' chamber over the gate, and as he went, his sorrow burst forth in words: 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' There was no attempt to hide this outburst of grief. His counsellors could not have concealed it had they wished. David himself was overpowered by the shock. He does not bury the sorrow in his heart till he reaches the palace; but struck down by overmastering anguish, he seeks the nearest place of refuge, the guard-room over the gate. Through its latticed window all who passed heard the king's wail for an unworthy son. This was no common grief. The probability of Absalom's death was present to David before the armies engaged. He took every precaution to save the prince's life; he could not be taken by surprise if these precautions failed. Even the question put to both the runners showed the current of his fears, it might almost be said, of his expectations. Fondness for a misguided son cannot explain this depth of sorrow. A rebel has met his death on the field of battle; the king whom he attempted to dethrone, instead of rejoicing at his people's victory, is overwhelmed by grief at the rebel's fate. Looking at the circumstances of the case as they lie on the surface, David's grief is inexplicable. He seems to have utterly forgotten the king in the man, and the man in the father, while we feel withal that even the fondest father would have shown more decency in his sorrow.

But this surface view of David's sorrow, though justly resented by the people as an insult to their faithfulness, was not the right view. Fondness for the young man was not the

cause of this grief, any more than fondness for Bathsheba's son was the cause of David's first display of excessive sorrow. In both cases his heart seemed ready to burst; in both cases the recoil from grief to composure was equally sudden; and in both the servants were unable to control or account for their master's sorrow. The same cause had been silently at work during the long years which elapsed between them. A father's fondness could not be that cause. For many years David and Absalom had seen little of each other. They had become strangers in feeling, and strangers by high-handed deeds of blood and violence. For many years, seven at least, they had seldom spoken to each other; for five of these they had not seen each other's face. Besides, Absalom had usurped a place in the empire which David knew he was never destined to fill. In seizing the throne he had also outraged natural affection. When we sum up these causes of estrangement between father and son, it seems contrary to the workings of humanity to ascribe David's grief to fondness for Absalom. The world has never seen aught approaching to this faulty tenderness of nature in a king or in a man. But the theory of such tenderness is unfounded.

David had deeper causes for grief than he could avow to the world. When, ten years before, 'he fasted and lay all night on the earth' during the sickness of Bathsheba's infant son, the sword of the Avenger had only begun to strike his life. When Absalom fell, that sword had been twice bathed in his children's blood, and thrice, too, it had cut the tenderest chords of family life. A fourfold restitution was the punishment David ordered for the stealer of the poor man's ewe lamb: a fourfold punishment — Bathsheba's infant son, Tamar's cruel fate, Amnon's death, and the shame of the ten women left to keep the palace — had not satisfied the Avenger of Uriah. But a fifth blow falls on his household: Absalom is slain, when his life might have been saved and the arm of the Avenger stayed. No escape from the doom uttered by



Nathan seems possible now. Every previous blow had been unavoidable, so far as David's power to avert it was concerned. Absalom's death in battle he feared and endeavoured to prevent. But for Joab, the prince would not have died. Never before did David fully realize the doom uttered against him, 'The sword shall never depart from thy house.' A dim outline of coming sorrow at first floated before his mind. As blow after blow descended, the outline was filled in with startling details, and this last stroke of the Avenger had completed, as it were, the distinctness of the picture. Hope of a remission of punishment was now gone for ever. The shock was greater than a sensitive mind could bear; a weak mind would have lost its balance. David was bidding farewell to hope, a farewell which could not be bidden without uncommon grief. His heart fainted at the prospect of other strokes from the Avenger's sword: his grief burst all the barriers of royalty, and of gratitude to his victorious soldiery.

Joab was the first to learn the effects of Absalom's death on David, and gradually the tidings spread among both officers and men. A sense of injustice pervaded all ranks. They had risked everything for the king. And now, when they have cleared the way for his safe return to the throne, they are saluted at their home-coming with tidings of his excessive grief for a rebel, who met the end he deserved. With that sense of right which actuates men in the circumstances, the army felt the unworthiness of this return for their services. The king's smile and approving words were the boons they fought for. But these they were denied. As they approached the city, their fears of an unwelcome reception were confirmed. Not the slightest show of gladness had been prepared for the victors. Their wives and daughters ought to have met them with songs and dances. But gloom and sorrow are reigning in the city. The king is giving vent to his grief. It was not the home-coming of a triumphant Hebrew host; it was the stealing into the city of soldiers ashamed of their conduct, and

to whom their countrymen and countrywomen would not extend a welcome.

Before the army reached the city, David returned to the palace from the gate chamber. There was no abatement of his grief. With muffled<sup>1</sup> head, and with deep sobbing, he continued to bewail his son. Joab, ever rough and ever faithful, forced his way into David's presence. Neither guards nor servants could keep him out of the chamber, hateful though his presence was to the king. The man who had caused this wild grief is allowed admission. He believed he had done the king and his family effectual service by putting Absalom out of the way. Probably unbiassed minds found little fault with Joab, except the cruelty of his ten guardsmen. David himself, king and statesman as he was, felt that much could be said in favour of the high-handed act, otherwise he never would have admitted him to an interview. With sharp reproaches Joab puts a new danger before David. The wrong-doer is not the general, but the king. The army, he says, has stolen into the city like beaten men; there was no welcome for them, no pride taken in their triumph. They have saved David and his wives and children: David in return has affronted them. He has loved his haters, and hated his friends. Princes and soldiers count as nothing in his estimation when weighed against Absalom. 'Rise,' he said, as if David lay stretched on the earth, 'go to the gate of the city, otherwise the men who have fought for thee will all leave thee before morning, a worse evil than any that has befallen thee from thy youth.' The remedy was rough, but the cure was effectual. David saw the danger; perhaps also he felt the unworthiness of his grief. It was not yet sunset. There was still time to thank the soldiers for their services in his cause. Orders were passed to the various divisions of the

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for *deal gently* (with Absalom) (1 Sam. xviii. 5) in David's charge to Joab, is the same as *muffled* (head) (1 Sam. xix. 4). The play upon the word, and the thrust in it at Joab, are evident.

army to muster in the city gate. David was there waiting to review them, precisely as he had done when they marched out to meet the rebels. The murmurs that were beginning to rise were laid to sleep. Cheerfulness again reigned throughout the host, and disaster was avoided by the rough but prudent firmness of Joab.

Although the rebellion was broken, the spirit which gave it power still lingered west of the Jordan. David had lost the affections of the people; their new king had fallen in battle, and there was not one of his followers competent to fill his place. The empire seemed to be again drifting on the rocks, which split it into fragments in the days of Saul. But there was a party in the land, especially among the central and northern tribes which, though small in numbers, had yet the prudence to shape public opinion into a recognition of David as the only safety of the country. The death of Absalom emboldened them to speak their sentiments freely. 'Absalom is dead,' they are reported to have argued, 'and there is none among us able to guide the destinies of the kingdom. Our neighbours are biding their time to impose on us the yoke of slavery. There is but one leader on whom we can rely; there is but one tower of safety for us.' The counsels of these king's friends, as we may call them, were the more readily listened to because Amasa, the general of Absalom, was then in Judah with the wreck of the rebel army. Although the rising in favour of Absalom had been general throughout the kingdom, its strength lay in David's own tribe; in that canton also the embers of rebellion smouldered longest. But the other tribes were more prudent in their management of affairs. Overtures had been made to David to resume the headship of the nation. But the men of Judah hung back in sullen estrangement. The high priests, Zadok and Abiathar, once so influential, had lost all power. Evidently the leading men of the tribe felt they had sinned too deeply for forgiveness. A proposal to the king to

forget the past was more than they dared to make. Peace must come from the king who had conquered, not from the broken tribesmen. David was not disposed to push his advantage to extremities against the rebels. With the support of the other tribes, it would have been easy for him to crush the sullen remnant in Judah who still stood aloof from owning his authority. Many in that tribe would probably have joined him. But calamity had softened David's heart. He was also looking for a general to take the place of Joab, whose disregard of orders could not be allowed to pass unpunished. Hitherto the wars, in which the nation had been engaged, had brought to light but one man fitted to govern an army. In vain had the king endeavoured to shake himself free from employing that man. There was blood on his hands crying to Heaven for vengeance. But now, for the first time since Abner's death, an opportunity was presented of displacing Joab. During the rebellion Amasa had shown a rapidity in action, which pointed him out to David as worthy to command the army. And as soon as the king heard of the movement among the other tribes, he resolved to secure Judah by offering Amasa the place filled by Joab. Instructions were accordingly sent to David's friends in Jerusalem, especially to the priests Zadok and Abiathar. A longer delay might witness the tide of loyalty rising so high among the other tribes that it would be at the peril of Judah to hold back. David's horror of Joab carried him a step too far. A pardonable regard for his own tribe carried him even farther. Much better would it have been for him to have undertaken the chief duties of Joab's office himself. But the appointment of Amasa was unwise. A beaten rebel was not a leader whom the troops of David would follow. In eagerness to degrade Joab, the king was degrading himself and his soldiers. Henceforth treason became the surest road to office. 'My brethren are ye,' ran David's message to Judah, 'My bone and my flesh are ye.'

He was quoting the words of submission, used long before when All-Israel came to Hebron to make him king. It is a peculiarity of the historian in Samuel to quote other writers, and to quote words recorded by himself also.

Under this sunshine of royal favour the sullenness of Judah rapidly gave place to exceeding loyalty. Before the other tribes were ready, perhaps even before they were all fully warned of David's purpose to return, the men of Judah had assembled in force at Gilgal, near Jericho, to escort the king to Jerusalem. The men of Benjamin were also represented. Shimei, the Benjamite, whose stone-throwing and cursing gave him reasonable cause for apprehension, was of the number. A band of a thousand men, all belonging to his own tribe, attended him, an earnest at once of his power and of the disaffection his punishment might cause. Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, had come himself, and had brought with him his fifteen sons and twenty servants as friends of Shimei. Probably Shimei's knowledge of Ziba's doings compelled Ziba to maintain an appearance of friendship with the foolish stone-thrower. But this ill-timed partiality for Judah produced unexpected fruit. Only one-half of Israel was in time for the meeting at Gilgal. Murmurs, open and alarming, told their dissatisfaction with the favour shown to Judah. The men who acted worst and hung back longest stood highest in the king's regard, from Amasa, the rebel chief, and Hushai, who seemed to the world the rebel prime minister, down to the humblest of the tribe of Judah. Nothing but a skilful leader was wanting to work greater trouble than Absalom had given.

Meanwhile the king, with his household and his men, approached the eastern bank of the river. The place chosen for the crossing was at one of those reaches of the Jordan where the stream spreads over the country, and allows an easy passage during the summer and autumn months. A ferry boat had been got ready for the women and children.

Soldiers and others went over by the ford before the king.<sup>1</sup> The western bank was thus held by David's guards before he himself ventured to cross. Almost the first man who met him on the shore was Shimei, come to crave pardon, with a whole 'thousand' of Benjamin to back his petition. Abishai, Joab, and other officers stood beside David as the traitor approached. Casting himself on the ground, he confessed the wrong he was guilty of, and urged as a plea for pardon that he was first of all the house of Joseph to bid the king welcome. Abishai could not listen with patience to these unmanly pleadings. The soldier who had been faithful to his oaths could not endure this cringing of a baffled rebel. With justifiable indignation Abishai interposed the question, 'Shall not Shimei die because he cursed the Lord's Anointed?' The true soldier spoke as he felt, and as all others around him probably felt. But it was a rash question. Abishai thrust himself into a matter of which he was not the judge. And he did this before a crowd of listeners. His words, if allowed to pass, might alarm thousands of other traitors besides Shimei. He took the reins of justice out of David's hands by proposing a punishment most just in itself, but most impolitic in the circumstances. Whatever David's own purposes may have been, the question of Abishai forced from him an unconditional pardon. He was driven into a corner by one of his most faithful followers. A rash word from the king, an attempt to impose conditions on Shimei, would give rise to endless reports and fears. The punishment of the rebel leaders was only put off; the discarding of Joab was a mere blind, and the appointment of Amasa was no guarantee for a

<sup>1</sup> An unfortunate division of the verse 2 Sam. xix. 17 has completely mystified the meaning. It reads thus (17): 'And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with Shimei, and Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king. (18) And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household.' The arrangement is clearly wrong; it should be: (17) '... his twenty servants with him. (18) And they (*i.e.* the king's own people) went over Jordan before the king; and there went over . . .'

traitor's safety. David was, perhaps, never before in so dangerous a position, when a word fitly spoken would still the gathering storm, or a hasty answer awaken the fears of a nation. Whatever he might have done had Abishai not spoken, there was but one course open to him after the soldier's luckless meddling—reproof to the one, pardon to the other; rebuke to a loyal retainer, favour to a traitor. 'With you and your brother,' he said, 'I have no community of feeling; ye are my evil genius.<sup>1</sup> No man shall die to-day.' Then, turning to Shimei, he added, 'Thou shalt not die,' and he confirmed his word by an oath in the name of Jehovah. Shimei was no friend to his throne or his race. At the first opportunity he would endeavour to overturn the former and destroy the latter. But the word passed for mercy David most faithfully kept. He was suspicious of Shimei; no trust could be reposed in him. Events had proved him to be a blunderer and a coward. But he was an intriguer from whom more danger might be dreaded than from bolder men. Shimei himself could not expect ever again to win the king's confidence. He was a man against whom ordinary prudence required David to be on his guard.

At this great meeting in Gilgal two friends parted from David, with honour to the king in the one case, with discredit in the other. Barzillai, the Gileadite noble, had accompanied him as far as the ferries. He crossed the river, but declined the king's pressing invitation to go up with him to Jerusalem. He was eighty years of age, he enjoyed in abundance everything the earth could yield, but the pleasures of a court were without attraction in his eyes. To die in his own city, and to be buried beside his father and his mother, were the prayer of this wealthy noble. He had *sustained* the king's household during these months of exile: 'Come with me,' the king said, 'and I will *sustain* thee with me in Jerusalem.' David might have promised him higher and better things

<sup>1</sup> Literally, 'For Satan to me.'

than eating and drinking, singing men and singing women—things, too, more suited to the age and standing of them both. Even the Queen of Sheba showed to better advantage, in her conversation with Solomon, than David in his invitation to Barzillai. But though the aged noble would not go to Jerusalem himself, he asked the king to extend a welcome to his son Chimham. David gladly consented. He did more. He seems to have made the son in some way a member of his own family, and to have given him a home or an estate near Bethlehem. More than four centuries afterwards, ‘the sojourning place of Chimham beside Bethlehem’ appears in the history (Jer. xli. 17). But while the parting of David from Barzillai was a source of honour, his parting from Mephibosheth was a disgrace. ‘When Jerusalem came to meet the king’ at Gilgal, the helpless cripple was among the crowd. ‘Wherefore wentest thou not with me?’ David asked. ‘My servant deceived me,’ he said. ‘I wished to go, but he went off with the ass that I told him to saddle, and he forbade his sons to help me. He hath slandered me to the king. But my lord is as an angel of God. I was honoured by the king, and have no right now to complain.’ David’s conscience was uneasy. He knew the worth of Ziba’s loyalty. Jonathan’s son ‘had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes,’<sup>1</sup> while the king was an exile from his capital; but his servant was an associate of David’s worst enemy, and had secured his master’s inheritance by the basest slanders. It was an unaccountable perversity of judgment to let the slanderer escape punishment. But it was a cruel act to say to the poor cripple, the son of his earliest and sincerest friend, ‘Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.’ ‘Let him take all,’ Mephibosheth replied, ‘since the king is come again in peace.’

<sup>1</sup> This is a proof of the short life of Absalom’s rebellion,—perhaps only three months (2 Sam. xxiv. 13).



A stormy discussion at Gilgal between the leading men of the two divisions of the people disturbed the return of the king. High words passed between them in David's presence, which he had not prudence or ability to prevent. Dissatisfied with the part assigned to them, the men of Israel complained of the offensive leadership sought for Judah. Although forming ten parts of the kingdom,<sup>1</sup> they were treated as inferiors, whose duty was not to advise, but to obey. The chiefs of Judah answered these just complaints with reproaches. Their own shortcomings during the past year ought to have given another turn to their thoughts. But the softness of speech which turns away wrath had no place among the soldiers of Judah. So fierce became the battle of words, that the peaceful meeting at Gilgal resembled the beginning of strife between two sections of the empire. As ill-timed as it was unwise was David's favour towards unworthy Judah. A leader was soon found for the disaffected Hebrews of the Ten Tribes, as unreasoning as were the people themselves. Passion and unreason forced the multitude to arms; there was no thought of the incompetence of the chief who called them to the field, or of the unfitness of their array to cope with the soldiers of David. A man of Benjamin, Sheba-ben-Bichri, gave the signal of revolt; he is called a worthless person. 'Portion in David have we none, and inheritance in Jesse's son none: every one to his tent, Israel,' was the proclamation he issued at Gilgal by sound of trumpet. Most of the members of the Ten Tribes appear to have retired to their own homes, dissatisfied and helpless. David they would not follow; Sheba they could not trust.

On receiving tidings of the rebellion of Sheba, David ordered Amasa, the new commander-in-chief, to assemble within three days the fighting men of Judah. Either they had returned home from escorting the king, or only the chief men had gone down to Gilgal. Zion was named as the

<sup>1</sup> For the explanation of *ten* parts, see above, p. 262.

meeting-place. But the new commander was either too slow in action, or found difficulties on which David did not reckon, for the three days passed without any signs of him or his forces. The king became alarmed; soldiers might gather round Sheba; or fortresses not yet recovered from the grasp of Absalom's party might admit him within their walls. So many were the indications of disaffection throughout the kingdom, that David said this adventurer had it in his power to do him more harm than Absalom. By gaining over to his side two or three strongholds, he could make them rallying-points for evil-minded men. Months might pass before they could be carried by the royal troops. Rebellion might then break out in other places and under leaders of greater name; the tributary nations would seize the opportunity for revolting, and the delay of a few days might lead to the shaking of the whole kingdom. Aware of the danger, David saw the necessity of employing another officer, and perhaps, also, more reliable troops. 'Now,' he said to Abishai, 'take thou thy lord's servants and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities and escapé us.' This was a most unwise commission to issue. It betrays David's distrust of Amasa's capacity or his loyalty. Nor could he hide from Joab and Abishai, any more than from himself, the mistake he had committed. There was only one safe course; he ought to have gone himself on the expedition for which he selected Abishai. But instead of keeping every one in his own place by a little self-denial, he remains behind in Jerusalem, and trusts a general whom he had lately reprimanded, and whose brother he had disgraced. Following on the unfair dealing with Mephibosheth, this fresh blunder may be looked on as an additional proof of a growing weakness of purpose in the king.

Although Joab had ceased to be commander-in-chief, 'the six hundred' were under his orders. They knew his skill as a commander; many of them had been enrolled at the first

formation of the band in the Cave of Adullam. These tried soldiers, with the guards of the palace and the order of the 'Mighties,' marched northwards. Abishai was the general in command, but, as Joab was in the army, every soldier knew that their real chief was the disgraced commander. At the Great Stone of Gibeon, on the highway leading to the north, they met the troops raised by Amasa. That officer at once assumed the command of Abishai's forces.<sup>1</sup> Probably a desire to make the two brothers feel their inferiority had as much to do with the act, as the more worthy motive of uniting the whole army under one head. Joab, pretending friendship, advanced from the ranks of the six hundred to salute his superior officer. The two men were cousins, or brothers, according to the language then current. Joab was armed with a short sword, sheathed and hanging from his girdle. It was unusual with him to carry arms, for special notice was taken of the fact that day. As he approached Amasa, the sheath, by accident or awkwardness, got turned upside down, and the sword fell to the ground. But it was done of set purpose. Stooping down, Joab picked up the weapon; and as he was too near his cousin to return it to its sheath without a breach of politeness, he advanced with the naked sword in his left hand. Amasa saw nothing to be afraid of. He was a general at the head of his army; the officer coming to salute him was his own cousin. 'Art thou in health, my brother?' Joab asked. Then, according to the custom of the East, he took hold of Amasa's beard with his right hand, as if to kiss his cheek. But when the victim was thus caught, with his left hand Joab buried the dagger in his cousin's right side. One gash was given, not with a faltering, but with an unskilful hand. Amasa's bowels, shed out on the ground, presented a sickening spectacle as he fell in his blood in the middle of the king's highway.

<sup>1</sup> 'Amasa went before them' (2 Sam. xx. 8). Compare 2 Sam. x. 16, 'Shobach went before them;' the meaning is, was their leader, or commander-in-chief.

A more dastardly murder could not have been committed. The general of an army slain by one of his own officers on the highway, and in presence of his soldiers, who imagined, like their chief, that the murderer was but saluting the commander! But the horror which the deed everywhere awoke touched the throne of David. Abner perished by Joab's hands at the end of one civil war: Amasa perishes in like manner at the end of another. Abner was bought over by David from the opposite side, but did not live to enjoy his reward: Amasa is bought over with the same price, and is murdered by the same assassin, before he had fully entered on office. David had only one way of escape from the charge of complicity in Joab's guilt, and that was by Joab's death. But Joab was too strong to be thus punished; or, more truly, David was too weak. Even the king's warmest friends must have felt that blood unavenged was defiling their master's throne.

All pretence of serving under a superior was thrown aside by Joab. He took the murdered man's place; he gave orders as of old; the soldiers, accustomed to obey, followed their former chief. But the feeling of confidence in Joab was not general among the new levies. They stood still, as they came up to the spot where Amasa was breathing out his life. For a leader so foully slain, it wanted but an angry voice and a ready hand to arm these soldiers against Joab. The longer they stood, the oftener they heard the story of the murder; and the greater the numbers that gathered round, the more imminent was the risk of a pursuit of Joab by those who had taken up arms to pursue Sheba. But one of Joab's officers had been left behind to guard against this danger. 'He that favoureth Joab,' he cried, 'and he that is for David—after Joab.' The appeal was made in vain. Seeing the danger, the officer removed the dying man from the highway into the field, and threw a cloak over the body. Since there was no one so forward for Amasa as was this man for Joab, the

soldiery began to move from the spot. Joab had again won with the sword the prize, which David had now twice vainly attempted to wrest from his grasp.

The rebels soon found that a soldier whom there was no trifling with had command of the king's army. No walled town would receive them; or, if it did, the approach of the pursuers forced them to seek another place of refuge. Their numbers also began to fall off. Men of standing did not join them. Sheba continued to be their head. Joab's forces grew in numbers the further the pursuit was continued, for every city and village was showing its loyalty by sending men to aid his enterprise. At last the rebels were hunted into the walled city of Abel-beth-Maachah in the distant north. It was surrounded by the royal troops; an earthen mound, thrown up at some distance from the wall, was rapidly pushed forward towards the city. Already had the embankment reached the trench. The battering-engine, swinging across, was shaking the wall. The defenders, too few or too cowardly, were doing nothing to prevent these preparations for assault. But the elders of the city were afraid to propose a surrender to Sheba, or to open their gates to Joab. They were between the hammer and the anvil. Sheba and his men had them in their power for the time; in a few hours Joab would arraign them for harbouring traitors. In this emergency the courage of a woman saved her people from a great calamity. Standing on the wall, she demanded a parley with Joab. He was soon ready to hear her proposals. Apparently the city had been at one time the home of a man of wisdom and uprightness, to whom people from a distance applied for advice. Reminding Joab of the name for wisdom which the place thus came to enjoy, the woman reproved him for attempting to destroy a mother city in Israel, a part of the Lord's inheritance. The general denied the charge; he wanted nothing but Sheba-ben-Bichri, the rebel. The terms were easier than the rebels counted on. Aware of this, the woman at once promised to

throw Sheba's head over the wall. Nor was it difficult to persuade those within the town to pay this price for deliverance. In a brief space the head of the rebel chief was thrown out to Joab. The royal forces at once returned to the south, and the rebels dispersed to their own homes. A second time, mainly by Joab's skill and rapidity of action, had the storm of civil war been turned aside from the throne of David. There was at last peace in All-Israel. But there was not contentment. The king himself, able from his high place and accurate knowledge of affairs to look deeper than other men, knew there was much cause for fear. Shimei, with his powerful backing of Benjamites, suspected, if he did not know, that he owed his life to the ill-judged meddling of Joab's brother. Abiathar, too, was a disappointed man. The high-priesthood, which he counted a birthright of his family, he found himself compelled to share with a rival, Zadok. And Joab felt that he held both place and life at the sword's point. But these three were types of many more, who only waited a chance to throw themselves into the whirlpool of civil strife.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CLOSE OF DAVID'S REIGN.

(2 Sam. xxii.-xxiv. 25 ; 1 Kings i. 1-ii. 11 ; 1 Chron. xxi. 1-xxix. 30.)

OF the events which took place during the last eight or nine years of David's reign, only two have been recorded ; the one of them, indeed, serves as introduction to the other. First was his sin in numbering the people ; then his preparations for building the temple. Whatever the sin may have been, it was the nation's as well as his. The vengeance, that had again and again fallen on the king's house in former years, disposes us to connect the punishment that came of numbering the people with David's sins and their consequences. But this is an error ; for the sin that brought down the punishment was Israel's, not David's only. The writer of the books of Samuel goes farther ; his words are : '*And again* the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.' The corresponding passage in the book of Chronicles is : '*And Satan stood up against Israel.*' While the former recorded two sins of Israel, the latter recorded only one, for the omission of the word '*again*' from the Chronicles is evidently not an accident. But the sin of Israel, recorded in the one book and passed over in the other, is the slaughter of the Gibeonites by Saul, a matter that had no connection with David and his house. Whatever, therefore, the sin of the nation may have been, it is clear that the punishment fell on them for their own doings, not for David's.

Twice before had Moses numbered the soldiers of Israel, in both cases with the approbation of God. And repeatedly

in after ages was the census of Judah taken and entered in the sacred books. But for following in the footsteps of Moses, David drew down vengeance on his people. Evidently, underneath the surface of the story, something is hid away which is needed to explain the sin and David's sorrow. A difference of opinion prevailed among the king's advisers. Joab and the military men were strongly opposed to his design. They retained their dislike to it even while the numbering was going on, and at last left the work unfinished. Something in the temper of the army, that is, the whole body of men in the country, lay at the root of this opposition. It may have been the tax of a half shekel which all those numbered had to pay. Small though it seems to us, and inadequate as a cause for grumbling, it ceased to be small when six or eight sons in one family had each to pay the half shekel. It was also an addition in money to existing taxes in kind, which were not light under the monarchy. And in that country money was scarce among Hebrew farmers; it would be largely unknown. But if a money tax were exacted then, it might not only be repeated, but be the beginning of larger demands. No numbering had taken place for four centuries; the tax had fallen into desuetude. To revive it was to lay a burden on the army, which Joab and his captains, who knew the temper of the soldiers, feared might lead to rebellion. Relieve them of the tax, and the grumbling would lose its foundation. But to relieve them of the tax was to insult the lawgiver, and to expose the soldiers to his indignation. By paying the tax to the sanctuary in a lump sum, David might hope to satisfy the law, and quell the discontent of his soldiers. But if he adopted this plan, he would break the law himself, and involve the whole nation in his guilt. In the darkness which covers the subject this explanation may be accepted as a hypothesis, which gives reasons for Joab's repugnance to the numbering, for the guilt of the people, and for the guilt of the king.

Comparing the numbering of David with that of Moses, we



remark a broad difference between them. Moses was commanded to take the census of the able-bodied men in the Hebrew host. David not only had no such orders, but was strongly opposed by some of his best officers. Then there was a reason for the numberings by Moses; there is none given for that of David. The land to be divided among the twelve tribes lay before the great lawgiver: a fair and equal parting of it into lots could be managed only by ascertaining the number of soldiers or families in each tribe. But though the king did not receive orders to take a census, as Moses did, he had permission from the law-book to take it at any time deemed proper. Punishment must therefore have descended on the nation, not for the mere act of numbering its able-bodied men, but for the unrecorded purpose involved in that numbering. The census was the first step towards some further piece of statecraft; but so speedily did punishment fall on the nation, that the policy thus begun was quietly allowed to drop, and never figured in its records. At the end of his reign David completed the census left unfinished by Joab. According to both accounts of this numbering, the tribes of Levi and Benjamin were not counted, 'for the king's word was abominable unto Joab.' But there is added in the *Chronicles*, that 'by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years and above.' It could not therefore have been the taking of the census that drew down on Israel the vengeance of Heaven; there was something deeper, unrecorded, but perhaps not unknown.

It is maintained by several writers that the sin of David was his neglect of the law, which required the payment of a half shekel to the sanctuary for every soldier at the numbering. Ignorance or disregard of this law, in their view, led the king into a grave mistake, precisely as a like ignorance, twenty years before, delayed the removal of the ark for three months from Kirjath to Jerusalem. But this explanation of the guilt is hardly tenable. There is not the slightest ground for attri-

buting to David either ignorance or disregard of this payment. A plague was certainly the punishment threatened if it were neglected.<sup>1</sup> But David was offered a choice of punishments, plague, famine, or, perhaps, civil strife. The fact of a choice having been given disproves this view of the sin. And its advocates overlook the strong opposition offered by Joab and his fellow-captains to the king's wishes, before a step was taken to number the people. David's chief soldiers based their dislike to the measure on other grounds than a neglect to pay the appointed fine to the sanctuary.

With an unwillingness which he took no pains to conceal, Joab began the work. The autumn heats were passed when he crossed the Jordan and began his review of the Hebrew militia in the plains, not far distant from the place where Moses numbered Israel. Moving northward and westward, Joab at last reached 'the stronghold of Tyre,' from which he journeyed southward to the utmost border of Judah. For nine months and twenty days he was engaged in the numbering. Even then it was not finished, for Levi and Benjamin were left uncounted. The 'strangers' scattered throughout the land were carefully numbered, as he journeyed from place to place; but the priests and Levites, who were also located in different parts from one end of the country to the other, were not entered on his rolls. David's policy, whatever it may have been, allowed Joab to dispense with a census of the tribe of Levi, but not with a census of the men of alien blood. Even the time spent in the work, if nothing more was done than number the soldiers of each district, seems excessive. A country so small as Israel, and so thoroughly under command,

<sup>1</sup> Ewald is of opinion that the plague punishment threatened for neglect of the half shekel payment was added in Ex. xxx. 12 by a later writer, because a plague did befall the Hebrews in David's time immediately after a census. This turning of history upside down may be ingenious and bold. But Ewald forgets to state that the word used for *plague* in Exodus is not the same as the word used in Samuel and the Chronicles,—a somewhat formidable barrier to the acceptance of his theory.

could not have required well-nigh ten months for taking the number of its able-bodied men. If its military organisation allowed Saul, at the beginning of his reign, to raise an army of 330,000 men in a few days, Joab had evidently something more to do than count heads. Nor was it necessary that an officer so high should be despatched on a service so commonplace, for there were well-known agents, called scribes or numberers, to whom this duty belonged. The time taken, the officer employed, and the objections urged against the step, go far to prove that a careful survey of the military resources of the empire was David's object, with a view to ulterior measures. Not the slightest hint of their nature is given by the historian. In this respect the writer of the book of Samuel is consistent with himself. He states facts as they were unfolded in the march of events; reasons and explanations he does not give. His readers may infer for themselves; but it is not his purpose to send the plummet of his critical pen down into the depths, to fathom the secrets of court and camp policy for his own entertainment or theirs.

In describing Joab's movements on this journey, the sacred writer mentions the well-known Hebrew towns, Aroer, Jazer, and Beersheba, and the better-known heathen cities, Sidon and Tyre. The only other town mentioned by name is a place of no importance, in the extreme north, called Dan-jaan. But Joab is also said to have visited 'all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites.' Had we only this account of the journey left us to serve as our guide in forming an idea of the census, we should be disposed to maintain that it was a numbering not of the Hebrews but of the remnants of ancient heathen, who still remained in nooks and corners of the land. The prominence given to the descendants of the original inhabitants is scarcely what we should have looked for. Tyre and Sidon were subject states in the reign of David; not conquered, as were Damascus and Edom, but states which had of their own choice placed themselves under the protection

of their powerful neighbours. Some years after, Solomon numbered these strangers a second time. The sum of them was found to be 153,600 able-bodied men, representing a population of more than half a million. But Tyre and Sidon, and the cities of the Philistines, are not counted in this reckoning. Hence it is not surprising to find the total force given in the book of Samuel different from that given in the Chronicles. When two writers preserve lists of the same returns, which may be summed up on different methods, a slight change in the way of looking at them necessarily causes differences in the results, which a superficial view pronounces inexplicable. The lists preserved are these :—

BOOK OF SAMUEL.		BOOK OF CHRONICLES.	
Men of Judah,	500,000 above twenty years of age.	Men of Judah,	470,000 above twenty years of age.
Men of Israel,	800,000 „ „	All-Israel,	1,100,000 „ „
Levi and Benjamin	not counted.	Levi and Benjamin	at first not counted.
		Levi (afterwards),	38,000 above thirty years of age.

The total force was thus 1,300,000 or 1,570,000 men. The mean of these two reckonings is 1,435,000, or in round numbers 1,440,000. But it will be shown afterwards that David and Solomon took fifths, not tenths, of the militia for service in their great enterprises. And the fifth part of 1,440,000 is 288,000. This number is of value in establishing the truth of the books of Kings and Chronicles. David's standing army consisted of twelve divisions of 24,000 each, or 288,000 men, almost the exact fifth of the total number of able-bodied men in his kingdom. The population of Hebrew blood cannot thus have been less than five millions and a half in an area of 12,000 square miles. Compared with the handful of people living in the country to-day, the number in David's reign may well seem incredible. But a survey of its ruined cities, its terraced hills, its countless tanks and cisterns of marvellous workmanship,<sup>1</sup> its wine or olive presses, its fertile

<sup>1</sup> See *Pal. Ec. Q. S.* 1872, p. 177. Merrill, *East of the Jordan*, pp. 91, 422.

soil, its weight of corn crops, and its fruit trees, will satisfy any reasonable man that the land could again support as dense a population, if similar laws and government gave security to life and property.

Scarcely had Joab returned to the capital, when David felt the misgivings which follow measures of doubtful rectitude. Nor had he long to wait till a message from heaven struck him with alarm. His friend and counsellor, Gad the seer, visited him early one morning, the bearer of tidings from God: 'Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things. . . . Shall seven<sup>1</sup> years of famine come unto thee in thy land? Or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? Or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? Now advise and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me.' No room was left for entreaty or excuse. David had not a word to say in defence of his conduct. He could only acknowledge his rashness, but that availed him nothing. Punishment must fall: a choice must be made. Naturally he turned to the unknown and the untried with less bitterness than to the known and the tried. Three years of drought and want had wasted the land already because of Saul's sin in murdering the Gibeonites. Discontent among the people and anguish to himself had been the result. He put the punishment aside as too bitter to be tasted again. Three months of flight before his enemies he had also tried—a bitter cup of sorrow to his house and people. A throne overturned, a kingdom rent in twain, a palace desolated, the tenderest strings of his heart's affections rudely snapped, a general foully murdered at the head of his troops and unavenged, had been the sum of his sorrows. The weight was too great to be borne a second time. And he turned as a last resource to the three days of pestilence. It was an untried punishment. Man with his bitter mocking would not be employed to carry the decree into effect. 'Let us fall now

<sup>1</sup> The correct reading is perhaps 'three,' not 'seven' (1 Chron. xxi. 12).

into the hand of the Lord,' he said, 'for His mercies are great.'

The choice was made: instantly the bolt from heaven fell on the nation. From that morning, 'even to the time appointed,' or 'till the time of afternoon prayer and sacrifice,' the plague raged throughout the land. Seventy thousand people perished. One in every twenty of the mighty host of men that kindled David's pride a few weeks before lay dead in one or two days' time. The Avenger was exacting a dreadful tithe from the Hebrew militia. And if the strong men fit to bear arms fell before His shafts, what havoc would be wrought among the women and children! One dead out of every twenty men tells a tale of woe more heartrending than famine or civil war. Meanwhile, the lofty heights on which Jerusalem was built escaped the destroying angel. But he approached them also. With outstretched hand the angel stood over the highest peak of the city hills, ready to put in force God's behest.<sup>1</sup> Whether it was a fierce simoom from the desert, working havoc in the low ground before it topped the crests of the hills, may be open to inquiry. This terrible plague befell the Hebrews not earlier than mid-summer,<sup>2</sup> the hottest and most unhealthy season of their year, in the very months during which the poisonous wind of the desert is looked for. But the high position of Zion, which saves it from some of the scourges of the valleys, may have sheltered its people from the plague for a considerable time.<sup>3</sup> It appears also that David was afraid to leave Jerusalem. When the storm first swept over the land, he would have repaired to

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Chron. xxi. 20, 'Ornan turned back and saw the angel;' but the context requires 'king' for 'angel.' The two words are written and spoken so much alike in the Hebrew, that the one might easily be mistaken for the other. And in the Septuagint version, it is 'saw the king,' not 'saw the angel.'

<sup>2</sup> The harvest had been gathered at Jerusalem, for Araunah was threshing wheat. This fixes the season of the year, July or August at the latest, the hottest months in Palestine (Isa. xxxvii. 7; 2 Sam. xxii. 16).

<sup>3</sup> The storm of thunder and lightning which followed the withdrawal of the plague points to the accuracy of this explanation, 1 Chron. xxi. 26.

Gibeon, then the seat of Moses' tabernacle and of the ancient altar of burnt-offering; but he 'dreaded the sword of the angel of the Lord.' Evidently Gibeon, as 'the great high place,' was esteemed by David himself a holier spot than his own Zion. But a pestilential wind from the wilderness would make the road to it unsafe. It was not David only whose life would be endangered. The stay and strength of the empire, the ministers of state, the warriors and others composing his retinue, would pay their toll to the messenger of vengeance when passing through the country. Better, then, to remain in Zion than thus to run into the very jaws of death. If this plague was the destroying angel, the messenger of God seen by David may have been the haze, topping the hills, and foretelling the bursting of the fiery hurricane on the city. That haze was truly an outstretched sword in the angel's hand, hanging over the doomed metropolis. He who makes the winds His messengers, and the lightning His servant, may have turned the fiery wind into His angel's sword among the homesteads of Israel. And the rapidity with which the plague was stayed is in keeping with this view of the messenger; for a north or west wind, suddenly rising, would, as an angel of mercy, speedily sweep the destroyer from the land.<sup>1</sup>

But be this view of the plague correct or not, the king and his counsellors were released from alarm at the very moment when they were looking for the bursting of the wrath on the capital. They had clothed themselves in sackcloth, they were fallen on the ground, they were in straits and terror. A sword was hanging in the heavens over the great city, full in the king's sight, perhaps in the sight of them all. Soon it would descend on the citizens. While the king and his advisers were thus prostrate in helplessness, the people of Zion could not be ignorant of the danger. More justly may

<sup>1</sup> It was probably a cool west or north wind which was blowing immediately after the plague was removed. Comp. Luke xii. 54, 55.

we imagine the citizens, appalled at the nearness of the ruin, in that fever of excitement which precedes the first burst of destruction. In agony, David implores the vengeance to fall on him and on his father's house. 'These sheep, what have they done?' he asked. Princes are not usually so full of pity for a stricken people as to offer themselves and their own kindred a sacrifice instead, least of all is such greatness of heart looked for from Eastern kings. But David was as great a man as he was a king: and even the wish to die instead of his people must be reckoned to his credit in the selfishness of a royal world. But a message of mercy reached him through Gad.<sup>1</sup> The angel of destruction had been told to 'put up his sword again into the sheath thereof;' and David was instructed to build an altar to God on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, by which the angel was. 'And the plague was stayed from Israel,' are the words which express the deliverance (2 Sam. xxiv. 21, 25). They are borrowed words, taken from the staying of the plague, first when Aaron stood between the living and the dead (Num. xvi. 48, 50), and again, when Phinehas turned away wrath from the people (Num. xxv. 8). Of the borrowing of the words from Numbers there is conclusive proof in the quoting of them in Psalm cvi. 30. If a psalmist could thus borrow a strange word and phrase, why not a historian? This threshing-floor was on the hill-top of Moriah. It was outside the city walls, and no dwellings could be near. Probably also it then rose abruptly on all sides to a top of small size, forming a suitable rock floor on which the oxen might trample out the harvest sheaves. Its height enabled it to catch every breeze, however gentle. And when the wind blew, the farmer and his men,

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Chron. xxi. 18, 'The angel of the Lord' is said to have 'commanded Gad to say to David' to build an altar. We must be careful to distinguish between the angel mentioned here, and the 'destroyer' whose sword was stretched over the city. There is no reason for believing them one and the same. Besides, the ordinary phrase for receiving a message from God is, 'The angel of the Lord' said or did so and so.



throwing the threshed grain into the air with wooden shovels, winnowed it from the chaff, which was blown away over the sides of the hill. Some time may have passed before David received the message of Gad and repaired to Moriah. Araunah, or Ornan, and his four sons were threshing wheat, a proof that the wind was blowing with considerable force. They were busily engaged, for the king and his retinue were on them before the family were aware. Turning round, Araunah saw the king approaching: his sons hastily hid themselves from sight. A natural enough fear of the great prince of the land may have suddenly seized the young men. But the hiding may have been prompted by a consciousness of wrong. When David and his people were clothed in sackcloth for a nation's sorrow, they had been engaged in ordinary labours. The conquering race was stricken with a great grief: the conquered, hard by the chief seat of superior power, had chosen that hour of trouble to rejoice. Even Araunah does not seem to have been free from alarm. Going out of the floor and touching the ground with his forehead, Araunah inquired the reason of the king's coming. He was told the cause, and asked to name his price for the hill. 'See the ox for the sacrifice, and the threshing instruments, and the housings of the ox for wood: the whole doth Araunah give, O king, to the king.'

The story, plain enough up to this point, now becomes somewhat obscure. David is in haste to fulfil the commands of God: the altar must be built at once, and a sacrifice offered. With truly royal spirit, Araunah offered the king whatever was required: 'Take and offer,' he said, 'the Lord thy God accept thee.' He may have really meant all he said. But possibly it was only an Eastern fashion of bargain-making, which considers it polite to begin with offering as a gift what the owner means all the time to charge well for. David declined the present. According to one account, he was to buy the floor and the oxen 'for a price;' according

to another, 'for the full price.' But when a Hebrew bought land under the Mosaic law, he bought it only for a certain number of years. At the time of jubilee, all estates sold during the previous fifty years returned to their former owners. The 'price,' therefore, may have been different from the 'full price,' as the purchase may have been either a lease for a number of years, or a purchase in perpetuity. The deed of sale between David and Araunah having been hastily entered into, would, as a matter of course, require revision, when the pressing necessity that called for an immediate sacrifice had been satisfied. As soon as Araunah named a price for the floor and the oxen, David considered himself entitled to proceed. A gift of the ground he would not have. Fifty shekels of silver were then asked and paid. They were earnest money for the full price. David's scruples were satisfied, and the bargain could be completed at leisure.<sup>1</sup>

Fifty shekels was not the price of the ground. Abraham paid four hundred silver shekels for the cave of Machpelah when the country was thinly peopled; and a vineyard in the time of Isaiah, containing a thousand vines, sold for a thousand shekels.<sup>2</sup> A threshing-floor, situated near the capital of a populous empire, would bring a very high sum. If David only gave an earnest penny at first, the fifty shekels of silver ending in six hundred of gold are at once explained. But there is no reason for thinking David contemplated the purchase of ten or eleven acres round the hill-floor, and the building of a temple on that large area. When the necessity for these changes on the first purchase arose, as it did in due time, the deed of sale required adjustment, and six hundred gold shekels cannot be considered more than a fair price. According to the narrative in Chronicles, the burnt-offerings

<sup>1</sup> An exact counterpart of the two prices in this story is given by Thierry in describing the strange scene at the burial of William the Conqueror.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. vii. 23; compare also Jer. xxxii. 9. The word for an earnest penny in Latin and Greek is Hebrew or Phœnician, *arrhabo*, which evidently became a trade word wherever Tyrian ships went.

and peace-offerings were followed by a storm of lightning playing on the top of the hill, which David accepted as a favourable answer to his sacrifice. A proclamation was also issued to the people, intimating that the house of the Lord was to be built on Moriah, and the only altar of burnt-offering for All-Israel.

The few months or years that remained of David's life were spent mainly in preparing for building this palace of Jehovah. The important bearings of this step on the national worship of the Hebrews do not appear to have bulked largely before the mind of the writer of the books of Samuel. At least he stops short in his history with the first purchase of Araunah's threshing-floor. He was not ignorant of the preparations then made, for at an early period in David's reign he records the dedication of spoils of war to the service of God. But the want is fully supplied by the details given in other books. A work of such magnitude and magnificence was slow of growth. Quarries had to be opened close to the site of the building; for there were neither roads nor rivers to transport blocks of stone in the rugged country round Jerusalem. Builders and stone-hewers, goldsmiths, joiners, and tool-makers could not easily be got, either in sufficient number or with the needful skill, in a kingdom then only rising from poverty and weakness into wealth and strength. Of timber there was plenty in the land, though the neighbourhood of Jerusalem has always been bare of trees. But as the cedars and cypresses of Lebanon were alone deemed fit for the palace of Jehovah, great gangs of workmen were required to cut down the trees and convey them to Moriah. When we consider that the arts of building and of ornamenting did not flourish in the reign of David, we shall better understand the obstacles he had to clear away before his son was in a position to found the temple. Kings in that age delighted in size and cost. The vastness of a building was not measured merely by the extent of ground covered, but

also by the size of stones used. Rampart walls rising in solid grandeur from the valley bottoms to heights of 150 feet or more, and composed of stones so large that, while many are still seen 20 or 30 feet long, one stretches for 38 feet 9 inches along the wall, gave this temple of Solomon the vastness which we attribute only to such works as the greatest Pyramids of Egypt. The builders of the Menai Bridge, in the early days of railway enterprise, had less credit in lifting an iron tube 1500 tons in weight to a height of 100 feet above high-water mark, than Solomon's engineers could claim when they moved stones of forty and fifty tons weight up or down the faces of the temple enclosure. The cost of the building was seen in an unstinted use of the rarest materials of the ancient world—iron, gold, precious stones, cedar. To erect vast piles of building on a plain watered by a lordly stream like the Nile, at once a roadway and a carrier for the heaviest loads, was a task not free from difficulties to a people far advanced in knowledge as were the Egyptians. But to build a most costly temple on the summit of a hill 2400 feet high, and in the heart of a land of almost inaccessible ruggedness, was an achievement that demanded years of thought from a people only beginning to study the arts.

David was aware that the magnificence which the sword had gained, the sword would also require to keep. And to maintain a high military spirit among the Hebrews seems to have been one of his great aims from the beginning to the close of his public life. Among his earliest arrangements towards this end was the Order of Mighties. Apparently it was founded when he was a wanderer with his band of 600 men. Asahel, who was slain by Abner before David left Hebron, was among those first enrolled. Uriah, the Hittite, another of the brotherhood in arms, perished at the siege of Rabbath Ammon; and the 'Mighties' are clearly mentioned as a distinct body, when Abishai received the command of all the household troops to pursue Sheba-ben-Bichri (2 Sam.

xx. 7). Apparently the number in the order was thirty-six. Three stood in the highest rank, three occupied a lower place, and other thirty formed the main body of companions. When a member fell in battle, his name was kept on the roll—an encouragement to brave men to follow in his footsteps, and an honour to his surviving kindred. Two copies of the roll have come down to our times. They differ slightly, as might be expected. The writer of Chronicles has preserved twenty-nine names of the thirty-seven found in Samuel; he has added twenty more. The lists present some singular features, apart altogether from grammatical difficulties raised by so many names often differently written. There are not fewer than five pairs of names from the same place or family, while there are also two triplets. But the names are those of men from all parts of the land, and include even an Ammonite, a Hittite, a Moabite, and a warrior of Zobah. Obviously it is the honour list of a small body of soldiers, not of the whole host of Israel. Seven towns or families could not have furnished sixteen out of the thirty-seven bravest men in the empire of David. ‘The Mighties’ formed an order of merit among the 600 who composed, first, David’s wilderness band, and then his most trusted soldiers. At least the achievements recorded of them belong to an early period in his reign.

The division of ‘the Mighties’ into two threes and a thirty is somewhat puzzling. Had there been only one three, it would have been the old Hebrew arrangement of one officer for every ten men. But a comparison of the two lists gives for the names in the first rank, Jashobeam, of the family of Hachmon (1 Chron. xxvii. 2, 32), who swung his spear over 800 slain in the course of one battle; Eleazar, the son of Dodo, and Shammah, the son of Agee. The names in the second rank are Abishai and Benaiah. Who was the third for these two? Allowing that the roll showed thirty-six names when complete, as is plain from the mention of two

threes and a thirty, we must reduce the thirty-seven mentioned in Samuel by three, one evidently the result of a transcriber's error, Adino the Eznite, and two who died before David's greatness had begun to wane, Asahel, the brother of Joab, and Uriah the Hittite. This will make the number thirty-four, or two short of the complete roll. But whose names were more likely to figure on a list so honourable as those of the two traitors, both of them commanders-in-chief—Joab and Amasa? One commander-in-chief, Benaiah of Kabzeel, gets a place of honour; another, long a commander-in-chief's right-hand man, and who, at the king's bidding, filled the post for a time, Abishai, is set down side by side with Benaiah. Add either Joab or Amasa, and the lost name of the second three is restored. That both were among the mightiest in David's host, is witnessed by the respect with which their prowess is mentioned. By a signal display of boldness at the siege of Jerusalem, Joab won again the office of chief commander, after he had forfeited it by the murder of Abner. Few of the 'Mighties' could boast of a prowess equal to his. Of Amasa it is said that he was 'chief of the captains' who flocked from Judah and Benjamin to offer their swords to David, while still an outlaw in the hold of Adullam. Nor is it difficult to assign a reason for the omission of these two great names. Amasa was a traitor to David, the only one apparently of that warrior band who broke his oath of fidelity. That he was received into favour after Absalom's death was but a piece of statecraft, which does not prove an unwillingness on David's part to strike a traitor's name from so honourable a roll.<sup>1</sup> Joab, too, had brought shame on the king and on himself. Blacker became the disgrace when he proved a traitor to Solomon. The omission of these two soldiers is strange enough; there is a niche left empty which either of them could well fill, but

<sup>1</sup> The two Ithrites, or sons of Jether, may have been related to Amasa, whose father's name was Jether. Perhaps they were his brothers.

there were reasons sufficient for placing neither of them in that niche of honour.

Another of David's arrangements for maintaining the discipline of his army was the calling out of a fifth part of the Hebrew militia for a month's duty every year. Fifths, or two-tenths, seem to have been regarded with more favour by David and Solomon than the old plan of tithes or tenths. Twenty-four thousand soldiers were gathered into a camp of exercise at Jerusalem, as we would term it, for a month's training at a time. Twelve of these divisions amount to 288,000 men. But the whole Hebrew force was reckoned by Joab, according to one writer, at 1,300,000; and according to another, at 1,570,000 soldiers. By taking the mean of these two sums, we have 1,435,000, of which 288,000 is almost the exact fifth or two-tenths. This may be not an accidental coincidence, but an unexpected proof of accuracy in the numbers. The chiefs of these twelve brigades were almost all men who had been trained along with David in the hardships of desert warfare. At the same time, there is something deeply affecting in the insight we thus gain into David's character. Stedfast in friendship, he surrounded his throne with the men who gathered to his banner when he was but an outlaw. A robber chief might have done the same kindness to the heads of his gang, had fortune raised him to a throne. But David was neither a robber nor a soldier of fortune. He was poet, philosopher, soldier, captain, chief, and king by turns; a man who could read the hearts of those in his service, and esteem the men at their proper value. And the names of the officers, chosen for the twelve divisions of the army, show both David's power of reading character and his affectionate regard for early friendships. He met with a deserved return; these men became the stay of his house. Six of them at least belonged to Judah; three of them to Bethlehem or its neighbourhood. David was allowing his own tribesmen more than a just share in the manage-

ment of affairs. But a policy, that seemed certain to ensure the stability of his throne by engaging them in its defence, was too narrow for the nation. By keeping the best men of other tribes mainly in inferior positions, he neither conciliated their esteem nor curbed their ambition. Every fresh appointment of a man of Judah to power only embittered the larger half of the kingdom. Time proved the greatness of the blunder. Judah was the first to rise against the king in Absalom's revolt; all Israel followed. A selfish policy, however agreeable at the beginning, is fatal in the end.

While order was thus introduced into the military affairs of the Hebrews, the right discharge of civil government was not overlooked by David. Centuries of a troubled national life, and the feeling of insecurity which arises from enemies in their midst, had taught the people to seek the shelter of walled towns or villages during the night. These centres of population were very numerous. Men who worked in the fields all day slept in towns or villages. By day the fields were peopled; the towns were in a great measure empty. By night the former were deserted except by watchers; the latter crowded. Within the narrow bounds of the twelve tribes there appear to have been about five hundred of these centres of life. In other words, there was a town or village for every twenty square miles. Since many extensive districts were either mountains or wilderness, the meaning of this is clear. A village or town was met with every three or four miles in a journey through the country. Judging from the army rolls, the average population of each town was about 10,000. The census of the tribe of Levi yields nearly the same result. As they dwelt in 48 cities, and there were 38,000 men of thirty years of age and upwards, the average number of men for each city was almost 800, representing a Levitical population of 5000. These village communities were law-abiding and easy to govern. On a raised seat, covered with fresh turf, near the gate, sat the elders of the place,—



men chosen by the people or appointed by the chief of the tribe. Offenders were brought before them ; accusers, witnesses, and public officers were at hand ; a crowd of onlookers watched the proceedings from the open space around. Then and there the case was tried, and punishment inflicted on the guilty. The city or village thus included the neighbouring country ; or, to speak in modern language, the boundaries of the former stretched to the utmost field owned by the citizens. David's home kingdom was thus a collection of well-peopled villages, each having its own pasture or arable land, its olive-yards and its vineyards. While every village or town had elders or rulers, the numerous communities in each tribe were governed by a chief called 'Prince of the Tribe.' We know nothing of his duties or position, save that he was a middle-man between the village elders and the king of the land. Thirteen of these princes are mentioned, among whom are included two for Levi and two for Manasseh. Asher and Gad are omitted. The names teach some lessons that are both curious and interesting. While several of the princes are altogether unknown, others occur in circumstances which help to throw light on the policy of David. First, there was a forgiving remembrance of the past in two of these appointments. His brother Elihu or Eliab, unworthy though he seems to have been, became prince of Judah. And Jaasiel son of Abner, besides being enrolled among the Mighties, was made chief over the tribe of Benjamin. Few things are more honourable in any man than this kindly remembrance of the son for his dead father's sake. But, second, the weakness of David, in advancing men of his own tribe, is also seen from this list of princes. Azareel, the son of Jeroham, became chief of Dan,—the same who is described as one of a brave band who joined David in Ziklag. He belonged to Gedor, a town, as far as we know, in Judah and not in Dan.

Besides the elders of cities and the princes of tribes, there were other officers appointed by the king to administer

justice. On the western side of Jordan, a body of 1700 Levites preserved the registers of the militia and judged the people. Over the tribes on the east of that river, another body, numbering 2700, discharged the same duties. Their office is described as belonging to the 'outward' or civil business of the kingdom. Its duties were twofold. First, they judged 'in every matter pertaining to God;' cases of conscience under the ceremonial law; cases of leprosy; redemption money, first-fruits, and tithes. The second head, 'affairs of the king,' manifestly included the correct keeping of militia registers, and perhaps the taxes paid to government. We may regard them as commissioners scattered over the country for administering the ceremonial law, and for attending to the business of king and Levites. While the elders judged between man and man in theft, murder, false witnessing, and crime of every kind, the Levites judged between priest and layman, or between king and people. To most of the men chosen for work, office was nominal and duty light. Only the cream of the tribe could be trusted to discharge the duties required. The large number of 6000 judges need therefore cause no surprise. It was simply the body of men from whom qualified judges were chosen, for it is contrary to experience to imagine that out of 38,000 men no fewer than 6000 could be found able to sift evidence, to hear cases, and to judge righteous judgment. A body of revenue collectors for the temple and the king, of readers or teachers of the law of Moses, and of sacred officials, made up the bulk of the tribe; the cream of these was drafted to higher and more responsible duty in judging between priest and layman, or between prince and people.

Towards the end of his reign, David's health was so broken that intrigue had full play at court. There were two great parties in the palace. One, headed by Joab and Abiathar, sought the throne for Adonijah, David's eldest surviving son. Nearly all the princes of the blood, and

nearly all the women of the palace, followed their leading. The chiefs of Judah were also drawn into the design. Adonijah claimed the kingdom as his birthright. It was his only title, unless the beauty of his person be deemed a recommendation to him, as it was to his brother Absalom. Neither in peace nor in war had he shown himself a man of affairs. To imitate Absalom's grandeur and his father's speeches seemed to him the right thing to do; but beyond stupid attempts at copying his betters, he had no fitness for statesmanship. Without waiting for his father's death, he and his friends prepared to seize the government. Apparently they believed David to be incapable of defeating their design had he wished. He had sunk, they seemed to think, beyond all hope of rallying. Perhaps he was unconscious of what was passing around him. Or, since the sick-room was under the charge of the chief wife, Bathsheba, they may have thought that she and her advisers would conceal the king's death from the people. Influenced by these views, and afraid of losing their chance, Adonijah indulged in the grandeur with which Absalom began his career of treason: 'He prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him' (1 Kings i. 5; 2 Sam. xv. 1). 'I will be king,' he boasted. He was a poor copier of a dead traitor. When the time came, as he thought, for taking the last step to the throne, he again followed the model of Absalom by summoning a meeting of his chief followers at a farm near the 'Stone of Zoheleth,' a little beyond the walls of Jerusalem. It was close to a fountain known as En-Rogel (The Fuller's Well), on the tongue of land where the Kedron on the east and the valley on the west of the city unite, before plunging into the defiles which lead down to the Dead Sea. Men of rank were flocking to the farm; sheep and oxen had been sacrificed for a feast; something of greater consequence than usual was clearly on foot. The friends of Adonijah neither dis-

trusted their own power, nor dreaded the hostility of the great officers, whom they had agreed to set aside or to put to death.

But David was not incapable of attending to business. His will was law in bequeathing the crown, and that will had not yet been fully ascertained. More than twenty years before, his friend Nathan had discovered on whom the choice of God had fallen. David was also aware of it; but the matter appears to have been little talked of between them. Benaiah, captain of the royal guards, Zadok, one of the high priests, and the whole of the 'Mighties,' if they did not favour Solomon, at least stood aloof from his brother. They were not so well prepared for the king's death as Joab and his friends. Had David been sunk too far to indicate his will, the party of Solomon might have had no head to lead them. But David still had vigour enough remaining to act the part of a king whose authority was defied. Nathan, apprised of the proceedings of Adonijah, put the right construction on his feast: 'Adonijah is king.' It was treason, as open and barefaced as was Absalom's. It meant death to Solomon, to Bathsheba, and to not a few of their friends. Apparently, too, shouts of 'Long live King Adonijah' had been raised in the banqueting-room, and speedily made known within the palace. Nathan at once saw Bathsheba, and instructed her to claim from David the fulfilment of his promise. As the favourite wife of the king, the sick-room was under her special charge. But when she entered the chamber, it was so clearly on business of state, that the dying man's attention was arrested by her looks. There was no one with the king but Abishag, the nurse, whose name and office would never have been mentioned in history, had she not been made a ground for the later intrigues of Joab and Adonijah. Bathsheba bowed with the usual formality of Eastern reverence. 'What is the matter with thee?' asked David. 'Didst thou not

swear to me by the Lord,' she said, 'that Solomon my son shall reign after thee?' Then she told her tale of treason towards him, of danger to herself and her son. She described the feast, she stated that a few traitors, whose names she gave, were proclaiming a king, while the 'eyes of All-Israel' were looking to the sovereign to name his heir. While she is speaking, the guards announce, 'Nathan the prophet.' Bathsheba retired when Nathan entered. He, too, is on business of state, for he touches the floor with his forehead. 'Hast thou named Adonijah king?' he asks. 'He is holding a coronation feast, the guests are shouting "Long live King Adonijah," but,' he added, 'to me, to Zadok, to Benaiah, and to Solomon no intimation was sent! Hast thou done this,' he asked, 'without making me aware?' Nathan was the king's friend, an honour that made him second person in the realm. If David had countenanced these doings of Adonijah, he had acted unfairly towards his aged and trusted friend.

Nathan's vigour and prudence ensured success. The ebbing tide of life in David was arrested: his mind, roused from the stupor into which it was sinking, strengthened for a time the bodily powers. He was a king, defied upon his throne by men whom he had raised to greatness, or whose crimes he had left unpunished. 'Call me Bathsheba,' he said to the attendants, as Nathan withdrew. She was close at hand. He assured her, as she stood before him, that the oath he swore by the Lord, who redeemed him from all evil, had not been forgotten. Solomon should be king after him. Overjoyed at her escape from a danger so great and so threatening as the accession of Adonijah, she threw herself on her knees and touched the floor with her forehead before the king. 'May my lord, King David, live for ever,' she said. In her case, as in many other cases since then, this absurd form of court speech did not seem out of keeping with the near approach of death.

David lost no time in fulfilling the promise thus made to his wife. Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah, the three great officers of state in the palace, were at once summoned to the sick-room. As they were the most trusted heads of the civil, the religious, and the military departments, it was fitting that in their presence David should name his heir. 'Take my guards with you,' he said, 'set my son Solomon on my own mule, go down to Gihon, and let the high priest with the chief prophet anoint him king. Let the state trumpeters call attention till ye proclaim, Long live Solomon the king! then return to the city and set Solomon on my throne, that all may know him to be king over Israel and Judah in my room.' Zadok and Nathan were named to discharge these duties. It was the business of Benaiah to see the king's will safely carried out. 'Amen,' said the soldier, as the king ended; 'a blessing attend King Solomon greater than the blessing which rested on King David.'

While the feast was proceeding privately at Adonijah's farm, the procession was forming in the palace to conduct Solomon publicly to Gihon. Zadok provided himself with the horn of sacred oil from the tabernacle; the guards and the 'Mighties' were drawn up to escort the king's officers; the trumpeters were ready, and Solomon was riding on the king's mule. Gihon was a place of public resort, a great spring of water outside, on the east of the city, with ample open space all round. What the temple courts came to be in after years, Gihon was then,—a public square, so to speak, a general meeting place for the citizens of Zion. All the men that were disengaged from business, and could move abroad, probably lounged beside the water tank. And it was not many hundred yards further up the valley than the Fuller's Well, with which indeed it was afterwards connected by a tunnel through the rock. As the procession swept down the narrow streets, a constantly increasing crowd gave greater publicity to an event so national as a king's corona-

tion. With almost the whole city looking on, and surrounded by great officers of state, royal guards, and chamberlains of the palace, Solomon was anointed king by Zadok the priest. The trumpeters then sounded, and the crowd of soldiers and citizens replied with loud shouts of 'Long live Solomon the king!' But the trumpeters were soldiers, not priests. At a famous coronation of one of Solomon's descendants, the trumpets used were, on the other hand, the silver trumpets of the priests, not the clarions of soldiers. The procession that climbed the steep streets to the palace, was far more numerous than that which came down to Gihon. With music and joyful cries the people followed their young sovereign into the city—the earth rang with the sound of their voices.

Adonijah and his guests were startled by this unwelcome noise, as their feast was drawing to a close. The prince himself, whose rashness in seizing his father's throne made every sense more acute, seems to have first heard the cries. Joab's practised ear caught the blare of trumpets. 'What means the shouting of the city crowd?' he asked. While the startled feasters vainly ask from one another an answer to the question put, David's trusty runner Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, reached the house. He had not been present at the feast. He had been a looker-on at the procession of Solomon. But he waited also to see the end of the coronation, from a feeling perhaps that David was either not in life, or was too feeble to sanction what was done. Adonijah's attendants announced the runner to the guests. 'Come in,' said the prince, imitating almost the very words he may have heard his father use, when Zadok's son was discerned approaching with tidings of Absalom's overthrow, 'thou art a man of might, and thou shalt tell good tidings.' But Jonathan's lucky star had set for ever. 'Woe!' he exclaimed, 'our lord the king, David, hath made Solomon king.' Then he described the anointing of the young ruler, the procession

through the city, and the seating of Solomon on the throne of his father. David had been brought out on his bed to witness the close of the ceremony, and to give public proof of his choice. Jonathan was an eye-witness of the scene. The chiefs of the realm paid homage to the new ruler in presence of their dying lord. When they wished Solomon a happier reign and a wider rule than his father, David was seen bowing himself on the bed, and was heard praying for a blessing on his son. Of David's ability still to transact business of state there was thus no doubt.<sup>1</sup>

Greatly frightened were the guests of Adonijah. Rising in disorder from the feast, they separated without thought of united action to save themselves from the fate they deserved. Joab had blundered beyond recall, in casting in his lot with men so weak as the princes of the blood. Adonijah may have been the ablest among them; but even he was no better than a copier of others. Terrified at his own rashness, he fled to the tabernacle on Zion, and seized hold of the horn of the altar. Nor would he let go his hold till Solomon passed his word not to put him to death. The shadow of the Avenger's sword was again darkening David's house. But not yet did that sword fall, for neither the young king nor his advisers wished the new reign to be baptized with a brother's blood. Adonijah received the assurance he sought, backed, however, with the condition that death should be the penalty of further treason. He returned with the king's messengers, was admitted to an interview, and then dismissed to his own house. A general pardon appears to have been given to the guests at the prince's feast.

A considerable time seems to have elapsed between the coronation of Solomon and the death of David. During these last days of failing strength, the king informed his

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan's account of what he saw, given by the historian in the runner's own words (1 Kings i. 43-48), fully bears out the much more detailed account of the second anointing in the last two chapters of the first book of Chronicles.



son of the arrangements he had made for building a temple to God. Plans had been drawn; gold, silver, precious stones, copper, and iron had been stored up; a site had been bought; and the builders, the guards, and other officers had been named—in some cases many years before the beginning of Solomon's reign. To the son promised him David now detailed these arrangements, and asked for him 'wisdom and understanding to keep the law of the Lord.' At a great meeting of 'all the congregation'—princes, captains, chamberlains, and Mighties—held in Jerusalem, David, while renewing his choice of Solomon for the throne, pronounced him the predicted builder of the temple, and encouraged his great men to help in the arduous work. Solomon was thus solemnly set apart as the chosen heir of David's greatness and purposes. And the noblest of these purposes was the building of a palace for Jehovah. On that object his heart was especially set to the latest hour of his life. 'Arise,' he said to that assembly, 'and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God.' The first anointing or coronation was a setting apart of Solomon to reign; the second was a further setting of him apart as the heir to David's great purposes of faith. Along with this setting apart of Solomon to carry out the purposes of David, is most fittingly recorded the anointing of Zadok to the sole high-priesthood. The latter was the complement of the former. On the day following these anointings, a feast was given to the nobles and people. A thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, were slain in the king's honour. Not a few of those who were present at En-Rogel were also present in this larger gathering. David's sons, who were then on Adonijah's side, are specially mentioned as having now submitted to Solomon's authority. Bred in a palace, they seem to have been fit for nothing nobler than its unworthy plots and scandals. Their father's attempt, many years before, to train them in wisdom, had turned out a failure.

But the faction of Adonijah, though baffled and disheartened, had not given up hope. From Solomon they neither expected nor received favour, beyond the boon of having their treason overlooked. Abiathar was stripped of his high office; Zadok became sole high priest. Joab was no longer commander-in-chief; the faithful Benaiah was elevated to that dignity. But Joab was not a man who could be expected to bear this open affront with an even temper. Twice before he had been set aside for deeds of blood; once he had regained the office by a cruel murder; he was prepared to win it a third time by more desperate measures. Abiathar, whose father's kindness to David brought almost utter ruin on his family, might justly regard himself as greatly wronged. These two officials were centres, round which disaffection would certainly rally as soon as David was dead. Their power was a menace to Solomon, ever present, ever ready to act. As soon as they recovered from the fright received at Adonijah's feast, they imagined that something might yet be done to regain what they had lost. But naught save suspicious whispers of a plot seem to have reached the palace. David knew they could not remain at rest. Of men like them did David say, 'The sons of Belial are as thorns. . . . The man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place.' While Joab lived, the throne of Solomon would be threatened with these thorns.

The king's fears for his son increased as his end approached. Absalom, supported by Amasa and Ahithophel, had not half the power against David that Adonijah, aided by Joab and Abiathar, might wield against Solomon. Where the former almost succeeded, the latter might succeed altogether. It was a troubled inheritance Solomon was entering on; and no one saw this more clearly, even amid the flickering lights of approaching death, than David. Unless his dying charge be looked at in this light, it reads as one of the most cruel and ungrateful returns for past services of which history has

preserved a record. Nor can the shame of a purposeless vengeance be otherwise wiped away from the memory of a worthy king. 'Be thou strong,' he said, 'and show thyself a man.' And in two ways were strength and manliness to be shown: First, by keeping the law of Moses; and second, by closely watching and sharply punishing suspected intriguers. Nor would they be less seen in honouring the children of faithful subjects, like Barzillai the Gileadite. The dying king enjoined on his youthful heir to keep the law, to favour those who had been the friends of his father, and 'to bring down to the grave with blood the hoar head' of Joab and Shimei. On reading this dying charge, nearly every one feels that David's death was unworthy of his life. Unable himself to take vengeance on Joab and Shimei, he bequeaths to his young son the disgrace of defiling his throne with their blood. While he urges on Solomon the duty of keeping the law, he seems to urge on him, in the next breath, the duty of breaking that law by murdering men who had done Solomon no wrong. Generosity of nature, the obligation of a plighted word, the recollection of hardships shared in common, till the tent of a wandering outlaw was left for the palace of a king,—all seem to be forgotten by David in a charge breathing nothing but vengeance. David's death, it would seem, is not an honour to his life. This is the surface view of his dying charge, and not less is it the common view taken by all readers. However, it is too unlike David's whole career to be the view taken by the men of his own time. A call for vengeance so senseless was unworthy of his experience to utter, or of Solomon's wisdom to respect. The dying king knew, and none knew better, Joab's ability and determination to accomplish any purpose on which his heart was set. Foul means came to his hand as readily as fair. Friendship and kinship were nothing to him, save useful cloaks to hide the wickedness of his plans. 'What he did to me,' David said to his son, 'thou knowest.' A story of wrong-doing may lie hid

under these few words, which we can never hope to recover. A cloak seems cast over something which David could not speak of but in a whisper. Was it, as some have thought, that Joab published David's letter of death against Uriah, and made known to the world the shameful story of Solomon's mother? Did he boast of his knowledge, and did he insult the true heir to the throne at Adonijah's feast? On these points history is silent. But the murders of Abner and Amasa, and his wanton disregard of orders in slaying Absalom, were never absent from David's thoughts. Benaiah might any day share Amasa's fate, and Solomon meet Absalom's. To us, who know that these things did not happen, Joab may seem to have got scant justice from David. But to David such an upturning of his own arrangements, especially when he was dead, seemed both possible and likely. In the meridian of David's life Joab paid no attention to the sovereign's wishes when they crossed his own: the death of David would render him more unscrupulous than ever. Benaiah, long his own inferior, had been raised over his head. Solomon, a boy-king at the best, had dared to cast on him a disgrace which the wise and cautious David had been twice baffled in attempting. An affront so galling Joab would resent, to the ruin of his adversaries, as soon as he got the chance. And as he had the will, it was hard to tell whether he had not also the power. Abiathar, the high priest, was a better right-hand man to parade before the army and the nation than his brother Abishai, his great helper in former murders. Adonijah, also, was not stained with blood as Absalom had been; and, among a people who were taught by long-established law and custom to respect the birthright of the eldest son, could plead a better title to the crown than Solomon. Shimei, the known enemy of David, was a man of great influence in Benjamin. The 'Men of Judah' favoured Adonijah, and the other tribes do not appear to have had leaders to guide their counsels. Were these enemies of Solomon to join in united action, or were any

slip in policy to put the young king in the wrong before the nation, he might have to maintain his position by arms; perhaps he might suddenly meet the fate of Amnon or Absalom. It is no injustice to Joab, and it is but fair to David, to consider that Adonijah's party had not lost hope of redressing their wrongs. These fears, imparted to David and justified by events after his death, explain his dying charge, and fully account for the cruelty that it seems to breathe. An appearance of cruelty towards Joab and Shimei may rather have been truest kindness towards Nathan, Benaiah, Zadok, and Solomon. To order a man's death is in itself a cruel thing; but it is infinitely less cruel, and it is vastly more wise, to order an intriguer's death than to leave it in his power, by murder or assassination, to throw a kingdom into disorder, to pervert the course of justice, and perhaps to plunge the people in civil war.

This last act of David's life is usually condemned as one of its worst. We have regarded it as a legacy which the state of his kingdom unhappily compelled him to leave to his heir. It presents in a strong light one of the many sides to his character, which it is unjust to pass judgment on without weighing the evidence in his favour, furnished by the historian of his reign, who had ample means of ascertaining the truth. We have not these means now. We see the many-sided character of the king, and we are too much disposed to judge it as a whole from its weakness or sin, more than from its strength or virtue. The historian follows a different and a safer plan. According to him, the character of David was like a cloudless morning, followed by a stormy noon and a somewhat troubled sunset. In opening manhood it was pure and lovely. No words could convey a true idea of its moral beauty, save those so often quoted and so often abused since then, 'Jehovah hath sought out a man after His own heart.' But that high estimate is given only once. It is awarded to

David before the cares of life and the dangers of a court had dimmed the splendour of his morning days. Only in the very outset of his career is David spoken of as a man after God's own heart. The praise is nowhere repeated. But it gives us a glimpse of moral worth seldom seen even in the best of men. When he first stood before the nation, he was, according to his own description of the just ruler, 'as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds.' But the character which shone with this spotless purity in youth became much stained in manhood. As blot after blot fell on the once fair surface, stunting and staining at the same moment, the historian not only embodies them in the record, but once at least adds the judgment of God on their nature and desert. When time unfolded the hidden powers and passions of David, there came to light a host of shortcomings, weaknesses, and sins, which the better nature that was in him had strength enough to vanquish if he had stood on his defence. The lie that he acted in the palace of Achish to save his life was among the first of these sorrowful stains; the lies that he uttered to the same Achish when, to secure the protection of that prince, he pretended to have made war on people with whom he was on terms of friendship, were meannesses to which he should never have stooped. But his conscience troubled him for these misdeeds. The lie which he uttered to Ahimelech when he fled to Nob, and pretended a secret mission from Saul, led to the desolation of the priestly house. 'I knew it,' he said to Ahimelech's son; 'I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.' Where his guilt was comparatively small, his conscience was sharp in judgment. Who can tell its keenness of stroke when his guilt was great? In the height of his power he debauched the wife of a gallant soldier, who was fighting his battles, and whom he cruelly got slain to screen his sin from the world. His morning glory then seemed wholly overcast. The same hand which once wrote of him as a man after God's

own heart, wrote of him as a despiser of God, who had given 'great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme.' And Jehovah, who anointed him king of Israel because he was a man after his own heart, pronounced on him the sentence, 'The sword shall never depart from thine house.'

On these unfoldings of the heart and soul of David, Scripture passes judgment as they arise. In no passage is there found an estimate of his character as a whole, and regarded during all his career. The sacred writer praises or blames, promises or threatens by turns. At one time David is a man after God's own heart; at another, a despiser of Jehovah; now giving occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, and again so earnest for the honour of God that 'shall he dwell in houses of cedar while the ark of God dwelleth within curtains?'; uttering lies of amazing meanness in Gath, and, almost in the next breath, publishing truths of amazing beauty in his songs; showing a noble greatness of soul in saving Saul's life, and a hateful wickedness in taking away Uriah's. But nowhere does the sacred writer speak of David in his general character as a man after God's own heart, any more than he considers him throughout life as a despiser of Jehovah. The truth lies midway between these extremes. At one period he was the former; at another, the latter. Underneath the baser part of his nature lay a greatness of soul that earned for him the honour of being called 'The servant of God.' When the evil that was in him mastered the good, its outbreaks seemed shocking at the time, and are counted equally shocking in our day. But these surprises were not habitual. They did not occur so often from month to month, and from year to year, that all around the king looked for them as ordinary unfoldings of his life. They were falls from a loftier to a lower state, bitterly regretted and speedily turned from with loathing.

Such is the view taken of David's character by the sacred writer. While knowing much better than we do what was

truly good in the king, he does not hide from us what was really bad. In our eyes, the evil that was wrought by David bulks more largely than the good; because, living in an age of high professions, we see it in its naked vileness: in the inspired writer's view, the good that David did held its rightful place, because he knew fully, what we only know in part, the worth which adorned that prince's life. The evil that David did lives after him, never losing aught of blackness as time rolls on, and the obligations of conscience are more recognised. But the good he did, and the worthy name he enjoyed, may shine with a feebler light, as we travel farther from his days of comparative darkness into those of clearer light and loftier morals. Knowing this, we are bound to take the character of the Hebrew king, drawn by the sacred writer, as a true picture of what the man really was.

That David was a brave soldier, and as good as he was brave, is proved both by the testimony of those who knew him, and by his actions. Of his valour in battle there is no need to speak. To bravery and goodness of heart combined was due the restraint he put on himself and his men, when Saul, an unwearied seeker after his life, fell into his power, not once, but twice. No generous mind can read the story of David's twofold forbearance without feeling how brave and great-hearted he must have been, who could thrust aside the wish for vengeance, or chide others for giving it room in their thoughts. Or can any one read the lament over Saul and Jonathan, and not recognise in the words the overflowing of a true mourner's heart? Or could greater bravery have been shown than David showed in forbidding Abishai to take the life of the wretched Shimei, who was insulting a king and his captains when they were driven to bay? Some may see in these actings of David nothing more noble or generous than happy moves of a skilful player in the political game, who has learned how much more easily respect for superiors is won by kindness than compelled by fear. But the facts



of the case are not explained by this theory. If we judge the king by the modern standard of Western civilization, we shall find much to admire in the scanty records of his life which have reached our day. But if we take for a standard the morality found in the courts of Eastern despots, whether in ancient or in modern times, we shall see in David a brightness of moral worth which marks him out as one of the noblest of our race. It is not to be denied that he was guilty of meannesses and crimes, which form a mournful setting to the bright features of his character. But there is no reason for regarding him as habitually given to low tricks or to great crimes. His errors were blots on an otherwise good name. Between David and the caricature of him which is occasionally drawn, there is the same difference as between a sheet of white paper blackened with several ink stains, and another wholly covered with ink. Tricks and crimes were not the outstanding features of his daily life. They appeared now and again, surprising himself and his friends. They were stray weeds in a field of rich grain, withered trees in a noble forest. Since this is the view taken of other great men's weaknesses and sins, it is only common fairness to apply to David the rules which are applied in judging them.

But perhaps the best proof of David's worth, apart from the direct statements of history, is the regard in which he was held by those who came much in contact with him. To have knit together the band of six hundred men amidst danger and trouble, implies a power to command respect and even affection by no means common among men. To have retained their unswerving allegiance for years, notwithstanding many inducements to betray him to his enemies, is a more singular testimony to his power over their rude natures. Treason did not exist in their ranks. Men, whose flocks and property he protected, were not only ungrateful for his kindness, but repaid his care with insult and treachery. None of the six hundred were traitors. They were devoted friends,

bound to their leader by an attachment which may well be called romantic. To gratify a mere whim on his part, three of them risked their lives in an enterprise against such superior numbers, that it counted as one of the greatest deeds in an age of great achievements. The words of the Apostle Paul were true of David: 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.' David, while far from being wholly righteous, was certainly good. A strangely mixed lot these six hundred were. Not a few of them were 'men of Belial,' the usual phrase for bad and unscrupulous men. Towards David they never manifested treachery and disloyalty. Not one of them betrayed their leader to Saul, although the people of Keilah and Ziph, whom he rescued or protected from danger, were guilty of this meanness. Stung by the loss of everything they held dear, when the Bedouin sacked Ziklag, they once spoke of stoning him; but the threat was a passing gust of irritation, which was more than justified by David's want of foresight. Even when the coarser natures among them had a show of fairness on their side, they did not dare long to dispute his authority. His word was law among them: he was a king, as few men have been kings, amid the fiercest and rudest natures. His word carried with it a royalty of manhood, which bids the loudest storm be still, and the most selfish outbreaks flow in less unworthy channels.

The life of David, like his writings, was full of poetry and romance. But, unlike them, it was not 'sweet singer's' work throughout. Genius is not an excuse for want of harmony between knowledge and action in a man's life. Although it is sometimes almost pleaded in palliation of a poet's or a statesman's failings, it ought not to be accepted as a justifying plea. Far less can it be received as an excuse for the blots on David's career. If the poet's heart is warmed to its brightest glow by love and war, never was there room for a more poetic life than the Hebrew king's. It

begins amid the peaceful scenes of a shepherd's life. The calmness of its morning time is suddenly broken by the din of arms, though there is heard amid the pauses of battle the sweet strains of a poet's harp. Men and women are seen uniting in their homage to the harper-hero, the young lion-heart of the nation. From the obscurity of a wilderness, the shepherd stepped at once into the full blaze of public life, as the champion of his people. But his heart was not uplifted, nor his sound sense impaired, by a change as sudden as it was great. He displayed also a magnetic power, which separated the men he met into two classes—those whom he attracted, and those whom he repelled. His followers were drawn towards him with an irresistible love. Saul was driven away by the madness of an incredible jealousy. Warriors and statesmen followed David to an outlaw's camp, and took the risks of a wandering life, rather than stay in a king's palace or seek a king's favour. When Saul was dead, nothing but his own want of faith kept his countrymen from placing the crown on his head. His greatest mistake was enlisting under the banner of Achish. It made his path to the throne a path of thorns and blood. Abner's assassination was a direct consequence of this mistake. David had to bear the blame of that murder, as well as of Ishbosheth's, unjustly, but unavoidably. Of his innocence in both cases there is not the least doubt. When the throne was at length reached, and the kingdom consolidated, luxury and ease began to undermine a heart that had withstood danger in the field, danger in the house, and danger in the wilderness. The women of his palace, by their jealousy and rivalry, seem to have done more to poison David's life than foreign or domestic foes.

Such was 'the sweet singer of Israel' in the wilderness and on the throne. It remains only to consider him as the poet of his people. What Moses was as their lawgiver, David became as their poet—the first and the greatest. He was not a lawgiver. He appears in the history as equally sub-

ject to the law with his brethren. But he was the national poet, who even gave his name to songs which were composed after models that he left. His fame rose still higher. The musical instruments of the Hebrew people were improved or invented by this sweet singer. If changes were made on them at a later period, greater credit was attributed to David, as the only name that was worthy of honour (Amos vi. 5). In the writing of sacred songs, he towers high above all who went before or came after him. This is the testimony of history not less than the voice of tradition. But modern scepticism refuses to hear the one or the other. With unreasoning prejudice, it denies to David all but a very few of the songs attributed to him by the ancients. It treats him as it treats Moses. His existence is not yet called in question; but, what is of equal worth, his writings are regarded not as his own, but as the works of pretenders to his name. History and tradition are both thrust out of court. The facts they testify to are ridiculed, while the fancies of a few romancers are exalted to the highest honour.

But David was more than a sweet singer. He was also a seer or prophet. In ancient nations the singer and the prophet have usually been found in the same person. Power of song seemed to lift men above the ranks of mortals into fellowship with Heaven itself. But this view was not held so strongly by the Hebrews as by other races. Often their prophets were poets; often they were prose writers. Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, though great prophets, are not known to have written poetry. Moses generally wrote in prose, and left behind him only two or three poems. David, on the other hand, has left nothing but poetry, unless we except his prayer of thanks in 2 Sam. vii. His prophecies are usually sublimely pious meditations on the goodness, the justice, the loving-kindness of God (Ps. viii., xix., xxix., xxiii.—xxv.). His religion had no tinge of the gloomy barbarities of heathen worship common to many ancient races. While it was equally

far removed from the light-hearted handling of divine things usual among the Greeks, it had a joyousness of feeling akin to the delight which they enjoyed in all the blendings of their faith with their life (Ps. xviii., lxviii.). David's religion, as it can be gathered from his songs, was a religion of intensest love, interwoven with profoundest justice. Although the one tempered the other, both had full scope, and both were always seen in action. But sometimes he soars into the region of the unknown future, and foretells coming greatness, or glory, or shame. A Being of human form, gifted with powers that are not human, floats before him. The prophet-king sees this Almighty Messiah, the anointed King,—*my Lord*, he calls him,—at one time in glory unapproachable by man, at another bowed under sufferings not common to humanity (Ps. ii., xxii., xlv., cx.). There is a shadowiness about the Being whom he sings of; an unavoidable dimness, for the prophet is describing One who is seen through the mists of many intervening ages. But the majesty of that Being, and His lowliness, His excellencing glory, and His exceeding sorrow, are distinctly painted in the poet's words. Who He is, whence He comes, and what His mission to men, are all left undetermined. A purpose in His coming is made clear, and a great work to be done by Him on earth is made equally clear. It is not the dim shadowing of a possible future, already lifting itself within suspected range of a poet's vision. It is the distinct outline of a great career, to which nothing corresponding is seen in history for ten centuries afterwards. While the outline is distinct, the filling in is left to time. The former is unmistakeable in its features; the latter is dim and uncertain. A higher than mortal power imparted to David the outline, but withheld the details of the picture. Men call the working of that power in a human heart *inspiration*. But in the poet-king it was an inspiration which looked across future centuries and unborn kingdoms, with a sureness of vision unknown and unapproached among the poets of any other people.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DEUTERONOMY—ANTIQUITY OF THE BOOK—INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

IN the course of the history we have found references made by the chief actors to a literature existing in their time and moulding their thoughts and ways. The book of Deuteronomy has repeatedly appeared, among other writings, as a great factor in the national life of Israel. If it was written by the Hebrew lawgiver about 1450 B.C., its place and influence are easily understood. But if the theory of its origin about the reign of Hezekiah (710 B.C.) be true, the whole history of the intervening centuries becomes dark or unintelligible. The age of the book must therefore be ascertained before the history can be understood. External evidence for its antiquity, derived from quotations and references made by later writers, exists in abundance, as has been frequently shown in the course of the previous history. But the internal evidence is so overwhelming, that it leaves no loophole of escape for those at least, who regard it as neither a real history written at the time, nor a pious fraud, but a novel or a parable. Seldom, or we should say never, in literature has there appeared a writing with so many marks about it, which prove it to be the work either of the man whose name it bears, or of a forger possessing unsurpassed power to deceive. It cannot be a parable. At the beginning Moses appears three times as the speaker of the laws given in the book. A little farther on he is named as setting apart on the east of Jordan three cities of refuge for manslayers, and as calling the people together to hear his words. But he is more than a speaker and a lawgiver. He is the writer of the law also, and of the song which follows

—in fact, of the whole book. But the third person is not maintained throughout. Mixed with passages in which he is so spoken of, are others in which the person changes from the third to the first. He speaks directly to the Hebrew nation, of which he was then the leader; he speaks also to their children, and their children's children to the latest generations, till a prophet-lawgiver like himself should arise to show them a better way. The words *I* and *me*, *we* and *you*, are repeated times without number, now in legal enactment or historic narrative, now in earnest entreaty, now in fiercest threatening. But he is more than speaker and writer of the book. He becomes also the giver of a written copy to the priests, with orders not to let the memory of it perish, but to take such steps for securing the safe transmission of it down the ages as never were taken with any other book. When the Emperor Tacitus (275 A.D.) ordered ten copies of his great namesake's works—the *Annals* and the *History*—to be written out every year, he took a step wise in itself, but far less effectual than the plan taken by Moses. These efforts for the preservation of the Roman writer bore little fruit. His books were lost, till parts of them were discovered in 1444 A.D., and again other parts in 1515 A.D. There is really only one manuscript of this great writer. Recently a book was published, which, while recognising the *History* as a genuine work of antiquity, undertook to prove the *Annals* a forgery of the fifteenth century of our era! The writer met with less respect than has fallen to the theorists who have treated Deuteronomy to the same criticism; but his case was as good as theirs. From first to last, then, embedded in legal documents, in exalted speeches, in stories of travel, and in finished poetry, the name of Moses stands forth as the author of this book. It is not one chapter, it may be said to be every chapter, which claims him for the writer. Never in any literature was evidence of authorship so full and so clear; or, if an alternative in such a flood of light must be taken, never was evidence of cool, deliberate forgery more complete.

The historical value of the book is shown by the precautions taken to ensure accuracy. It was not merely spoken to men who were in their youth eye-witnesses and actors in the great drama, by one who was himself the chief actor. It was also written by him or by his orders. A legendary history is excluded by the written accuracy aimed at. A parable is also excluded. A true history or a scandalous forgery is the only alternative left.

With the question of authorship might also be expected to come up the farther question of editing. Often the writer of an ancient book was neither editor nor publisher. Death or misadventure has been known to pluck the pen of matchless power from the hand that held it, before the work was ended. A daughter, a friend, or a successor, was believed to have given it the finishing touches. And in such cases critics have been and will be for ever divided on the lesser things, which seem to indicate not the great author's, but his editor's hand. The editing of a noble book, however important in itself, is a small thing in comparison with its authorship. While the latter may be clear as noonday, the former may be dark as midnight. No critic, worthy of the name, will hesitate to acknowledge the author because he has doubts or difficulties about the editor. And it is a strong proof of the resourceless character of much sacred criticism in our day, that it endeavours to confound two things, which the best judges of ancient writings have kept separate. The eighth book of Thucydides contains somewhat less writing than the fifth book of Moses. But although the title of the former to the honour of being a genuine composition has been denied from ancient times, while the historic reality of the latter was till recently universally recognised, few critics of Thucydides go farther than to say they feel certain 'not only that this book remained unpublished at its author's death, but that it was left by him in an incomplete state.' Not even this can be said of Deuteronomy, unless it be a forgery. In Thucydides' eighth book, again,



‘traces of redaction by a strange hand may also be discerned in portions of its text.’ These are not worth mentioning in comparison with the authorship. Mure<sup>1</sup> dismisses them in half a page, while he assigns one hundred and eighty altogether to Thucydides and his work. If there were editing of Deuteronomy by friend or successor of the author, the editor would not treat the great work to other handling than that of a reverent disciple, who might wish to clear off a speck of darkness here and there, but who would regard the precious things of the book with profoundest respect, and would seldom allow himself to touch what seemed small.

If the book was a forgery, written seven centuries or more after the pretended author was dead, we have in it an extraordinary example of reticence. No forger is ever able to escape the difficulty of letting something out, which helps to bring home to him his misdoing. However careful he may be, there is sure to happen at some turn in a story a leakage which reveals the truth. But in this long and exceedingly varied book no leakage of later facts has really been discovered. Ingenuity has searched in vain for this ever-present proof of forgery. Examples of it have been adduced from the book; but the more closely they are sifted, the brighter is seen to be the sunshine of truth in the story told. Vast changes took place in Israel during the eight centuries which preceded the supposed forgery. A fugitive host of foemen entered and conquered Palestine, divided the country among them, and then for four centuries fought for existence as separated or warring tribes. From being a republic, Israel became a limited monarchy. Kings took the place of judges, and one of them made the Hebrew State the first empire of his age. Under another, the kingdom so painfully raised to greatness was split in two, weakened by civil strife, and preyed on by powerful neighbours. At last the larger of the two fragments, after losing towns and provinces to Damascus, Moab, and Ammon,

<sup>1</sup> Mure, *Hist. of Greek Lit.* v. 55, 573.

was itself repeatedly wasted and then overwhelmed by the power of Assyria. Literature was cultivated among the Hebrews during these eight centuries. Changes, very striking to the imagination, took place in their worship and in their art of war. But of all these things there is not one word or one hint in Deuteronomy. If it be a true history, it could not contain references to them. If it be a forgery, no man could have written it without in some way or another showing his hand. At or near the time it is thought to have been written, Hezekiah, king of Judah, had been driven from nearly fifty fortresses by the king of Assyria, and shut up 'like a caged bird' in Jerusalem. Or if it were published some years later, his son Manasseh was snubbed and chastised by the same foreign power. But of all this not one hint is found or suspected in the book. It is full of Egypt. Israel's danger, Israel's warning, is Egypt. Of Assyria, the conqueror, the waster, the insolent chastiser, there is neither word nor hint. Evidently Assyria was not in the thoughts of the writer. It had not risen above his horizon.

Had Assyria been a country unknown in Hebrew annals, this silence might have caused no surprise. But that empire had been the cradle of Israel. From its people the founders of the nation had sprung, or had sought wives for their sons. A true prophet writing a novel, or a false prophet perpetrating a fraud in Hezekiah's reign, could not have avoided turning his thoughts more towards Assyria, the home of Abraham, than towards Egypt, the place of his people's bondage. Ancient leanings, the lives of the patriarchs, and the surroundings of his own time, all pointed towards the Assyrian empire as demanding from the supposed author mention in the pages of Deuteronomy. 'Asshur shall carry thee away captive' occurs in Numbers, entirely in agreement with the country of Balaam, but Asshur is unknown in Deuteronomy. This silence is a convincing proof of the antiquity and historic reality of the book. 'A Syrian ready to perish was

my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few' (Deut. xxvi. 5), is the nearest approach to a recognition of the ancient Assyrian home of the Hebrews. But it is an approach, which falls so far short of what the supposed fraud or romance requires as to prove the truth and antiquity of the book.

But let us suppose the treatise to be a genuine work of the Mosaic age. The books which follow it in the order of time ought, then, to show traces of its influence on the people's life and speech. Formerly it was denied that such traces existed; now they are recognised to an alarming extent. But the theorists were not moved from their theory. A way of avoiding destruction is open to them which would be rejected in the field of profane criticism. The forger, they say, or his followers, were too skilful to be caught in this trap. He or they went over *some* of the books in Hebrew literature—Joshua, Judges, Samuel—which have come down to our day, and inserted what was needful to bring them into agreement with the forged Deuteronomy—a word or two here, a verse or two there, a whole chapter in a third place. Whatever view be taken of Deuteronomy,—whether it be called an innocent parable or a pious fraud,—this falsifying of history can only be pronounced intentionally dishonest. The men who were guilty of it, if the theory be true, knew what they were doing, and why they were doing it. With a skill of which the justest measure is their success in escaping detection for over two thousand years, they set themselves to deceive posterity by darkening the sources of history. A more discreditable performance was never heard of in the history of literature. But possibly the discredit attaches to the theory of the moderns, not to the doings of the supposed ancients; for to the first theory of tampering with the original books of Hebrew history, a second theory is found to be indispensable. *Some* only, not *all* of these books were thus tampered with. A few of the historical works were defaced

by revisers; the prophetic books escaped or were overlooked. If any one expresses surprise at these skilful revisers showing themselves so unskilful as to leave several witnesses to testify against their misdeeds, he is quieted by an additional theory of which there is as much proof as of the other two. It is this. The histories which have been tampered with were *probably* all on one roll, or formed one book! The revisers, then, did not consider it necessary to inquire how many other books there might be, telling a different story from their manufactured goods. Such, then, are the theories of tampering by revisers. Well may a reader ask if, with such beginnings, the whole is not matter for ridicule more than for sober argument? The judgment of Grote, when he quotes with approval the words of an English writer on similar proceedings of modern critics, who have as unfairly handled the works of ancient Greeks, holds good in the case before us: 'The usual subterfuge of baffled research—erroneous readings and etymological sophistry—is made to reduce every stubborn and intractable text to something like the consistency required' (i. 400).

The next piece of internal evidence is the place where the book professes to have been written—on the east side of Jordan, before the Hebrews crossed that river for the conquest of Canaan. It says so at the beginning of the first chapter, as we shall see fully afterwards. Moses, also, is introduced in the opening pages praying: 'Let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon' (iii. 25). And again, we read of him telling the people: 'I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan; but ye shall go over and possess that good land' (iv. 22). The same longing for permission to cross, the same sorrowful cry of despair at the refusal, turns up at the end as it does in the beginning of the book: 'And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me,

Thou shalt not go over this Jordan' (xxx. 2). Nothing could be plainer than these statements. As they ring with the sound of truth, they are true; or, as they seem to ring with the sound of truth but do not, they are the words of a forger. To find a place for them within the sphere of parable or romance-writing seems impossible, especially with so many other marks about the book which compel us to regard it as either a real history or a fraud.

There is no mention of Jerusalem in the book, or of the temple, as there *ought* to have been, if it was written when Hezekiah was attempting to put down the high places, and make his capital the only seat of ritual worship. We say there ought to have been mention made of Jerusalem, or some hint let fall about it to prevent mistake. For the writer of the book gives a place in its pages to Ebal and Gerizim, which tended to make them eclipse every other region in the land, as the Samaritans in our Lord's time naturally believed they did. He ordered a great altar to be built on Ebal; 'all the words of this law very plainly' to be written upon it when 'plaistered with plaister,'—a thing which the Hebrews had been accustomed to in Egypt, but are not known to have practised after their settlement in Canaan,—the chiefest of the tribes to stand on Gerizim to utter the blessings, the least of them to stand on Ebal to utter the curses, and, apparently, the ark with the priests to occupy the grand amphitheatre between. The town of Shechem in this amphitheatre was the central point of Palestine, and the natural capital of the country. By this writer, then, an importance is assigned to the whole neighbourhood, which went far to defeat the purpose he had in view, if, as the theory supposes, that purpose was to write up Zion in the reign of Hezekiah as the only place of acceptable sacrifice. Besides, Ebal and Gerizim were then in a kingdom far from friendly with Judah. Perhaps, indeed, they were occupied at the time supposed by a mixed race of Israelites and heathens, wholly given to idolatry. The com-

mand to build an altar on Ebal is intelligible if published before the people crossed the Jordan in 1450 B.C.; it is unintelligible if published many centuries after the conquest.

The next evidence to the truth of the book is that it is full of remembrances of Egypt, which many of the people still knew from personal experience, and of the weary wilderness which they had all left but a month or two before. The land of bondage is constantly appearing under aspects of singular variety. No forger, however teeming his brain might be, could have devised the variety or equalled the freshness of these remembrances of Egypt. There are about fifty altogether in the book. Nearly a third of them have for their refrain: 'The Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt;' but it is so often embellished with lifelike pictures of the place,—iron furnace, the house of bondage,—or of the wonders done in furtherance of bringing them out, or of the way in which they came out, that the variety makes the ever-repeated phrase pleasing. Nor was it reading of other men's books, or personal travel in the land, it was actual labour, which entitled a passage so strikingly true as the following to a place in its pages: 'The land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs' (xi. 10). Had not thousands of them in their earliest years painfully toiled at the mill, lifting water from the Nile, and using the foot, as peasants there have always done, to clear a channel for the bucket to pour its living stream on the planted ground, this reminder would have been unintelligible. To people who had spent their youth in Egypt the words were fresh as the spring grass. To people who knew the place only by report, who had never been in it, neither they nor their fathers, for centuries, the words were as withered as the grass of the desert under an autumn sun. The language would have been as much out of place in Hezekiah's reign as would be appeals to English-

men in Victoria's, which reminded them of the pleasant fields and clear skies left by their Norman forefathers seven or eight centuries ago.

While the house of bondage and heavy labour stands out in Deuteronomy too clearly to be a fraud, invented to cheat people into a false idea of the origin of the book, there is given another view of Egypt which a forger or a parable-writer could not be expected to take: 'Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge; but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence.' A lesson of kindness to the stranger, or of gratitude for deliverance wrought from cruel bondage, is drawn again and again in the pages of this book. Had that and other lessons been frauds or parables enforced for the first time eight centuries after the bondage, the book could not have been received with the reverence shown by the chiefs of the land. The king 'rent his clothes:' 'Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us,' he said; and Huldah assured him that his eyes should not see all the evil that was coming on Jerusalem and Judah. Unless the story of the book, as told in its own pages, be true, we are again plunged in a farther sea of hypocrisy and deceit.

It is possible to bring out an undesigned contrast between Egypt and the wilderness by comparing two passages bearing on the same thing. When Passover was first instituted, the people were told to put away all leaven out of their 'houses' or 'habitations;' and 'to strike the lintel and two side-posts of the door with the blood that is in the bason.' The house, the lintel, the door, the door-posts, are always mentioned in Ex. xii. But in Deuteronomy there is a marked change in the idea. Neither Leviticus nor Numbers affords a means of making the comparison which the fifth book furnishes: 'Thou shalt roast [and boil] and eat,' it says of the seven days' Passover feast, 'in the place which the Lord thy God

shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents' (xvi. 7). Long custom, the ways and manners of forty years of wandering in a houseless wilderness, had changed the manner of speech. It was tents then, and had been tents for twoscore years. Houses built of stone had again become familiar since the people left the desert, and won the fields and cities of Eastern Palestine; but ways of speaking are neither lightly taken up nor lightly laid aside. 'Thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents' is the escape of a phrase, which brings vividly before a reader the daily life of the writer.

There is a remarkable omission in Deuteronomy which goes far to confirm the evidence already brought forward. Horses and chariots were numerous in the land of Egypt at the time of the exodus. But nowhere in the last four books of Moses does the horse appear as a domestic animal among the Hebrews. Ploughing was done by the ox or the ass; fetching and carrying were the work of the camel and the ass; war was conducted by solid bodies of footmen without support from a chariot force. The horse is known certainly to the writer of Deuteronomy, but not as a useful friend of man. It is regarded with alarm: 'When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots and people more than thou, be not afraid of them' (Deut. xx. 1, xiv. 4, 7). All this ignorance of the horse—dislike of it or fear of it—is easily explained if the book was written at the time it says. But it is incredible if the work was composed by a forger or a parable-writer in Hezekiah's or Josiah's time. Horses and chariots were then familiar things in Palestine, and had been familiar for ages: 'Their land is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots' (Isa. ii. 7). They were not regarded with terror. But no part of the Mosaic record gives the slightest hint of horses being in use for any purpose among the Hebrews. Nor would the lawgiver have kept silence on the redemption money for the firstlings of so valuable an



animal, when he specified those of other and inferior beasts.<sup>1</sup> The price of a horse in Solomon's reign was about £17, 10s. of our money; the price of an ox at the same time was much less. But the greatest calamities which could befall a Hebrew farmer are thus described: 'Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof; thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee; thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them' (Deut. xxviii. 31). Only on the supposition that the writer of the book was living among a people who had no horses in their camp, is this silence intelligible. And previous to David's time the horse was unknown as a domestic animal among the Hebrews.

A diligent study of the laws contained in the book of Deuteronomy might furnish unthought of evidence for the place of its origin. One example may be sufficient. Of the animals allowed or forbidden to be eaten (Deut. xiv. 1-20), fourteen species of quadrupeds are named and twenty-one species of birds. All these birds are forbidden food; only four of the quadrupeds are unclean. Common domestic fowl, such as the cock and the hen, are never named in the Old Testament. The monuments of Egypt preserve the same silence regarding them, though their numbers in that country may have been as great in ancient as in modern times. Geese were bred extensively in Egypt; reference is perhaps made to that bird in the Hebrew Bible (1 Kings v. 3). Of the twenty-one kinds of birds forbidden to be eaten, nine are found in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy only—once in each case. None of the others are of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament except the eagle (*nesher*), which is found once or oftener in fourteen different books. The large number of forbidden birds is thus a feature in the law-book demanding explanation. But there is another feature perhaps equally singular. The general name for eagle is *nesher*, as may be

<sup>1</sup> See also Amos iv. 10, vi. 12; Isa. xxx. 16, xxxi. 1.

gathered from the number of books in which it occurs. But the Deuteronomic law indicates at least three kinds of eagle, two of which are not mentioned elsewhere save once in Leviticus, while the third is peculiar to Deuteronomy. Two or three kinds of vultures and of hawks are also mentioned almost in these books only. There is clearly a peculiarity in the prominence given to forbidden birds—to eagles, to vultures, and to hawks—which nothing in the history of Israel after the conquest helps to explain. Is it explicable from their history before the conquest?

There is no reason for regarding the desert of Sinai as distinguished for the host of birds, which this enumeration of twenty-one forbidden kinds clearly implies. Egypt was such a country, with wild mountain ranges a few miles from crowded cities, with a mighty river rolling through it, and with an inundation covering the land every year. It remains the same to this day. 'Birds of prey are numerous in Egypt, and of many kinds. Of the most remarkable are three species of large naked-necked vultures, . . . several species of eagles and falcons, . . . two kinds of hawks.'<sup>1</sup> Besides, the written language of that country met the Hebrews at every turn in their daily labours. It was seen on obelisks, on memorial pillars, on avenues leading to temples, on the outside of temples as well as on the inside, on the gateways of towns and palaces. So splendid was the writing, that it appealed to the least observant. Greek travellers, surveying these monuments many ages afterwards, described it as 'animal writing,' from the numerous figures of birds and beasts used for alphabetic signs. This writing, with its eagles, hawks, vultures, owls, snakes, and geese, was always before the eyes of Hebrew bondmen. They were familiar with the birds on the monuments of Egypt. They were also familiar with not a few of them on the streets of its cities and villages. But they had other reasons for attaching importance to these birds. Most

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, 'Egypt,' pp. 712, 713.

of the twenty-one species were sacred birds in Egypt, deified or worshipped for the services they rendered to mankind in cleaning the streets or roads, or for the lordliness of their nature. Mummies, or stuffed specimens of them, carvings of them in stone or elaborate paintings, were seen everywhere, wrought so minutely by the artists that the markings on the stone enabled Wilkinson to detect among the birds of Egypt a variety of the hawk, which had previously escaped notice.<sup>1</sup> Even the State head-dress of the king, and the pictures of the gods of Egypt, represented one or more of these birds. Manifestly, therefore, the Exodus enables a reader to understand the tables of forbidden birds in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. An intelligent man might almost construct them from the pictures of birds and beasts given on one or two plates in Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*. They reflect the times and manners of Israel in Egypt. At no other period of the history is an equally good explanation possible, or, indeed, any satisfactory explanation whatever.

The regulation laid down in Deut. xiv. 9 for distinguishing allowed from forbidden fish, holds good in Egypt to this hour: 'All that have fins and scales shall ye eat.' 'The modern inhabitants of the country are partial to fish as food; but they say that only those fishes which have scales are wholesome.' During the inundation the quantity of fish obtained in every corner of Egypt is, as it always has been, immense. Herodotus even imagined the soil to bring them forth in shoals. With truth, therefore, the murmuring people said to Moses, what they could never say of Palestine: 'We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt for nothing' (Num. xi. 5).

References to almost all the chief events related in the three preceding books are found in Deuteronomy. But they are of such a nature as not merely to suggest but even to compel the idea, that a reader of them must have known where he could get full details. Fathers of families, or wandering Levites,

<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, iii. 317.

might use the book as a primer for the young. Events only hinted at in its pages they could give more fully from other writings. On this point no doubt ought to rest. Brief references are made in Deuteronomy to a known and written record of the past. Should any one regard them as written hints pointing to a known but unwritten history, he makes an assumption which cannot be allowed. When the hints and references have been committed to writing, it is natural to infer that the older history, to which they send a reader back, is in writing also. But that older history is really satisfied in all its requirements by the story told in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Hence the narrative in these three books is most justly regarded as the narrative, to which the writer of Deuteronomy is constantly referring. Attempts have been made to show a wide divergence in the statements of Deuteronomy from those in the three preceding books. That alleged divergence will be considered in its proper place. But at present we have to show the close verbal agreement between the brief hints let fall in Deuteronomy, and the fuller details given in the preceding books of the Pentateuch. A comparison of several passages will go far to prove the existence of the latter as the source from which the former have been quoted or copied.

Let us begin with the story of that terrible judgment, when a nation was born in a night amid the bitter cries of its oppressors. 'Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread,' it says, 'the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste; . . . neither shall there anything of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning' (Deut. xvi. 3, 4). The word here translated *in haste* occurs only twice elsewhere in the whole Bible, first in Ex. xii. 11, at the institution of the Passover, 'Ye shall eat it in haste,' and next in Isa. lii. 12, 'Ye shall not go out in haste, nor go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward.' Unquestionably Isaiah borrowed both word and idea

from Deuteronomy. But the latter was indebted to Exodus; for the eating of the lamb in haste is not likely to have been an idea coined from the going out of Egypt in haste. The words 'bread of affliction' prove the same point. 'Affliction' is a term found only in three of the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy. And there can be no difficulty in tracing the connection between the following passages:—

DEUT. xxvi. 7.

When we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression.

Ex. iii. 7. See also iv. 31.

The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters.

The writer of Deuteronomy quoted the book of Exodus with the freedom one could take when he was repeating words from a story, which he had himself written forty years before. But his teaching is incomplete. Naturally he would feel it unnecessary to be so precise in Deuteronomy as he had been in the earlier books, for they were accessible in one form or another to all, whose faith or whose curiosity was stirred by his later and briefer record.

The next event in Hebrew history glanced at by the writer of Deuteronomy (xi. 2–4) is the escape of the fugitives at the Red Sea: 'And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, His greatness, His mighty hand, and His stretched-out arm, and His miracles, and His acts, which He did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; and what He did unto the army of Egypt, and to their horses, and to their chariots; how He made the water of the Red Sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day.' A story so briefly told is clearly a reminder to people who had seen the great overthrow with their own eyes, or had learned it from such as had. This reminder points back to the book of Exodus, not to a vague tradition. And the very words used compel this conclusion. The full phrase,

‘a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,’ does not occur in Exodus. But the two halves of it are found there—the latter once, the former five times. The full Exodus phrase is, ‘With great power and with a mighty hand,’ which reappears in Nehemiah (i. 10). But the full phrase of Deuteronomy is comparatively rare. It occurs five times in that book, and is borrowed in subsequent books only about as often. It is an original blending of the two halves, which are found in Exodus separately, one of them only once. Jeremiah, by borrowing the phrase in its fullest form word for word, becomes a witness to its originality; ‘with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror’ (Deut. iv. 34; Jer. xxxii. 21). Only the extremest scepticism can suspect Jeremiah of having coined the phrase and foisted it into Deuteronomy. The writer of that book thus put together, with original power, the two halves of a striking figure, which were both used separately in an earlier writing. The borrowing of his words by Jeremiah and others is a proof of the genius with which he seized hold on the minds of the ablest men who came after him. But the freedom of his handling comes out also in other parts of the passage under review. He coins new phrases, ‘the chastisement of the Lord your God, His greatness, His mighty hand, and His stretched-out arm.’ The first word, *chastisement*, occurring but once in the Pentateuch, took hold of poets so great as Isaiah and Hosea, who used it in the same sense as it occurs here (Deut. xi. 2; Isa. xxvi. 16, liii. 5; Hos. v. 2). ‘His greatness’ is less frequently found. And the word ‘overflow,’ with which the writer describes the overwhelming of Israel’s pursuers under the waters of the Red Sea, is another proof of his originality and of the power he wielded over the minds of later writers. It is met with but three times altogether in the Bible (Deut. xi. 4; Lam. iii. 54; 2 Kings vi. 6). He was not a slavish borrower of antique words, which might serve to flavour a writing of to-day with

the fragrance of ancient speech. He has been represented as such. He was a coiner of singular forms distinguished by rare beauty. Sometimes they were pieced together from older books. At other times their novelty, or the remarkable settings in which they were presented to the world, displayed an unusual fire of genius. But if he merely picked out rare things from older books, his borrowed plumes could never hide his poverty of thought, or deceive men into a false estimate of his wealth. We accept his own account of these borrowings. He was drawing on himself, as an honest man is entitled to do. He was not plundering the treasures of another. And because he was using his own resources, he did what a writer of ability always does—he changed his ways of looking at things and of speaking from those he used in the past. Enough remained to show that it was the same pen and the same head, though the pen had not lost its cunning to shape forms of beauty, nor the head its power to infuse fresh life into what time had made somewhat common.

The keynote to the Mosaic legislation is found in the opening words of the covenant made at Sinai. They precede all law and all ritual. They also give a tone to the whole legislation, which it loses the moment they are overlooked. The words are: ‘If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant,’ etc. (Ex. xix. 5). Or with reference to the angel who should lead the people to their land of rest: ‘Obey his voice,’ and, ‘If thou wilt obey his voice.’ A form of speech the same, or nearly the same, runs through the whole of the Old Testament, though it is unfortunately lost sight of in our English translation by needless changes in the English words used. As the Hebrew word for *to hear* means also *to obey*, the mixing up of the two ideas in the English Bible has obscured the sense in many passages.<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy contains about

<sup>1</sup> Thus the English of Ps. lxxxi. 8, 11, 13, completely disguises the fact that the poet is sounding, in the very words of Exodus and Deuteronomy, the keynote of the whole legislation, *hearing or obedience*.

twenty examples of the same or a like phrase. The writer of it was deeply impressed with the necessity of sounding the same keynote throughout his purely popular treatise. And while he borrowed it from Exodus, that is, from himself, historian and poet and prophet borrowed it from his books all down the ages. The phrase, 'To obey my voice,' with its various changes of form, became the thread on which the events of history were ultimately strung. By failing to observe this use of words, passages such as Jer. vii. 22 cannot be understood: 'I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice.' 'Obey' was the first and great thing; 'sacrifice' came far behind then, even as it did in Samuel's day.

But the borrowing in Deuteronomy from Exodus and the following books is not confined to one phrase, important though it be. As examples of similar indebtedness, we shall quote the following passages, putting in *italics* the words which happen to be the same in both. A fairer and surer proof of borrowing or quoting could not be had:—

## DEUT. ix. 12-14.

*The Lord said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. And the Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Let me alone that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater [more numerous] than they.*<sup>1</sup>

## EX. xxxii. 7-10.

*The Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.*

<sup>1</sup> Num. xiv. 12 has, 'A nation greater and mightier than they.'



The borrowing in the one book from the other requires no farther proof. Plainly, too, Exodus was the original writing.

DEUT. ix. 17.

I took the two tables and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

EX. xxxii. 19.

He cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

DEUT. ix. 20, 21.

The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time. *And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.*

EX. xxxii. 20.

*And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.*

DEUT. i. 28, 29, 42.

*The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven: and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there. Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them.*

NUM. xiii. 28, xiv. 9, 42.

*The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and, moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. . . . rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land.*

In all these cases, Deuteronomy is unquestionably the book last written. But while there is no doubt of the reproducing in its pages of things told elsewhere, as little doubt is there of additions being made to the narrative which no one but an actor in the great drama was entitled to make, unless he had commissioned a friend or secretary to write in his name. 'The brook descending out of the mount,' and the speech, 'Dread not, neither be afraid of them,' are touches added to the narrative as told in Exodus and Numbers, which compel us, even without looking to many similar touches, to regard the writer either as the man he says he is, or as a bold romancer. Nothing in his way of speaking countenances the idea of romance or forgery. Every word in his narrative disposes a reader to take a realistic view of the speeches. Here, also, we find the writer of Deuteronomy doing exactly what the writer of Chronicles is charged with—copying and adding something to the piece copied. It is safer to say, they

borrowed what they were entitled to borrow, and they added what they knew to be facts not recorded in histories then accessible to the public.<sup>1</sup>

If, then, the preceding books of the Pentateuch supplied those parts of Deuteronomy which we have considered, we cannot stop there and say they can have supplied no more. The curse on Amalek in the one is word for word the same as in the other. 'Write this for a memorial in the book,' says Exodus (xvii. 14), 'for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.' Clearly *the book*, whatever it was, is also quoted in Deuteronomy (xxv. 18, 19), where the same Hebrew words occur, arranged in the same order: 'Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.' But here also we have the freedom of handling which we have already had reason to look for in a writer who was repeating, after forty years, a story told by himself before. He adds something to the narrative given in Exodus, and he uses words seldom found in ancient Hebrew books, and never in other parts of the Pentateuch: 'How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee; when thou wast faint and weary.' The reference to Exodus in this extract from Deuteronomy, and to the contents of the book, is therefore clear. Nor is this the end of the borrowing. For the Prophet Isaiah copies, even while he varies the words quoted above against Amalek:

<sup>1</sup> On comparing the numerous historical references in Ps. cv. 23-cvi. 33, with those in Deuteronomy, the value of the argument in the text is more fully seen. No doubt rests on the origin of the references in these two Psalms. They were taken from the three books, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. Many of the words and phrases were also borrowed from Deuteronomy. While all this is universally allowed, while, indeed, it is too plain to be denied, one most important fact is overlooked. The two Psalms contain things which are as fully or even more fully stated in the book of Deuteronomy. If, therefore, the two Psalms borrowed the history from the then existing books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, on what principle can the writer of Deuteronomy be supposed to have got his information from a different source? Only one answer is possible to the question. He had no other source except the personal knowledge which enabled him to write all four books.

‘Write it before them in a table,’ he says of his own people (Isa. xxx. 8), ‘and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever.’ And not to bring forward other similarities in that same sermon of the great prophet of Hezekiah’s court, will any reader refuse to recognise the filial relation of his words, ‘One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee’ (Isa. xxx. 17), to the parent words in Deut. xxxii. 30, ‘How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight?’ Manifestly Deuteronomy preceded Isaiah, and Exodus preceded Deuteronomy. If it were not so, let an unbeliever attempt to put these passages in what he considers the order of time.

Let us proceed with the references in Deuteronomy to the previous history. Immediately after the writer’s brief glance at the overthrow of Egypt in the Red Sea, he introduces another incident, taking one only as an illustration of his text: ‘And ye know this day what He did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place; and what He did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel’ (Deut. xi. 5, 6). Manifestly this is a brief note of facts related at length in the book of Numbers. And in the same way, the full account of what befell Miriam is hinted at in Deut. xxiv. 8, 9, as a thing well known and recorded elsewhere: ‘Take heed in the plague of leprosy that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do. Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come out of Egypt.’ One half of this extract refers to the law of leprosy in Leviticus; the other half to an unhappy quarrel, which resulted in that plague seizing Miriam. The former bids us consult a piece of law which some writers say

was then handed down by word of mouth ; the latter sends us to a piece of history which is allowed to have then been in writing. A distinction, which we have not the slightest reason to think ever existed, is thus drawn between two closely connected things. As well might we say that both pieces were in writing, as that one was written while the other was not. If both were in writing, and that seems too simple a conclusion to be refused, then it will be extremely hard to avoid the farther conclusion, that the whole of the two books of Leviticus and Numbers were in writing when Deuteronomy was published.

But here comes in a singular distinction. Some of the passages quoted from Exodus and Numbers are allowed to be of considerable antiquity ; others are declared to be of the age of Daniel, but not of the age of Moses. Without demanding any authority for this splitting of the passages into two kinds so unlike, we may ask why they are quoted so indiscriminately and so patly, as if they were taken from the same well-known written book ? The command to eat the passover in haste is said to be not older than the Exile ; the command to write the baseness of Amalek in the book is, it seems, also recent ; and the same is said of the law of leprosy. The story of Miriam is said to have been written in David's or Solomon's time, though, as might be expected, more than half of the story of Israel's escape from Pharaoh's host is an addition by quite a recent hand. The position in which a reader of Deuteronomy is put by this splitting of the events, briefly referred to in the book, is somewhat singular. Many of them were written fully out two, or more than two, centuries after the short notes given in Deuteronomy. The fifth book is thus the oldest written record for some of these events. Since, then, they were extended and embellished out of that book, it becomes a quarry from which solid blocks were hewn to adorn the system called the Levitical legislation. On the other hand, the author unquestionably borrowed from older writings. His book thus becomes a reservoir into which were poured old

words, ancient sayings, bits of history, and scraps of law and tradition, which filled it up to the level of antiquity. Whoever can accept a theory leading to these results, is far out of the reach of argument.

We have thus established an intimate relationship between Deuteronomy and the three preceding books. But the writer of the former is generally believed to have let words and things escape from an incautious pen, which betray the fact that he lived long after the days of Moses. It is well-nigh impossible for a writer living in one age so to transport himself into another, separated from it by several centuries, as to speak and act like a hero of the earlier time. He has too many pitfalls to avoid, too many slippery paths to tread on, and too often to balance his trembling foot on the knife-edge of a precipice, which may afford escape from one danger by threatening to hurl him into the abyss of another. Forgers have always to dread the risks of their unhallowed calling. If the writer of Deuteronomy was one of them, he must have again and again stumbled into pitfalls and toppled over precipices. But when these alleged stumbles are examined, the word-slips really dwindle to a solitary one, and that one a preposition, which is found nine times in the book, and only once in all the other writings ascribed to Moses: '*On this side* Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red Sea.' '*On this side* Jordan,' if literally rendered, would read, 'At Jordan crossing,' or 'At Jordan ferry.' But precisely as in English the words 'at Jordan crossing' do not indicate the east or west side of the river, unless the context makes it clear, so in Hebrew '*on this side* Jordan' is an ambiguous phrase, which requires something added to bring out its real meaning. The preposition, translated *on this side*, means east or west of the river, according to explanations given in the context. Thus, on whatever side of the stream the writer of the book of Deuteronomy may have been, he uses the word to express both the east side and the west side in two passages

separated by about twenty lines. It means the *east* side, as the context clearly shows, in 'We took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that was *on this side* Jordan from the river of Arnon unto Mount Hermon' (Deut. iii. 8); while, speaking of the rest of their countrymen to the tribes settled on the east side, the same writer immediately after uses it to mark out the *west* side, though he himself had not changed his place of writing: 'Until the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the Lord your God hath given them *beyond* Jordan' (Deut. iii. 20). The same word is used by the same speaker in the same passage, and without change in his position, for our *on the other side* or *beyond*, and our *on this side*. There is no escape from this conclusion. An ambiguous word has, by puzzled critics, been pressed into the duty of convicting the author of forgery. He was really, it is said, on the west side of the river. Forgetting his position, he is imagined to have commenced the book by writing, 'Beyond Jordan in the wilderness.' Meaning to say 'On this side,' that is, on the east side of Jordan, he forgot himself, and said, 'Beyond Jordan in the wilderness.' Our translators, taking pity upon him, concealed his blunder by making him say in English what he is thought not to have said in Hebrew, 'On this side Jordan in the wilderness.' On a point so narrow is the proof of forgery based!

But the writer of Deuteronomy was aware of the ambiguity of this and other words. And he was careful to prevent that ambiguity from giving trouble, or causing perplexity to any reader who was willing to learn. In every case which might be a source of doubt, he defines the side intended. Sometimes it is done by the phrases, 'Toward the sun-rising,' and, 'By the way where the sun goeth down.' At other times the ambiguity is avoided by joining the word to places, which were too well known to cause mistake to any intelligent hearer or reader. In the book of Joshua, where the phrase

occurs twelve times with respect to Jordan, and more frequently than in any other writer, the same means of avoiding the ambiguity are observed (xii. 1, 7). But in four passages it is not defined, for the meaning is clear without any qualifying clause. In Deuteronomy only one passage out of nine is left without definition.<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the word in that case could not be mistaken. It appears, then, that the conclusion, which would sweep away the vast body of evidence for the historic reality of the book, is built on the use of a preposition of ambiguous meaning. Nor is that the worst which can be said. The preposition in question is never used in the book without a careful defining of its meaning, except in one instance, which is too clear to cause the slightest doubt. Unusual care seems, indeed, to have been taken to guard against this argument for the theory of a forgery, by the pains which the speaker or the writer put himself to in defining the word wherever it was used.

Another passage is frequently quoted as a proof of later writing than the age of Moses: 'The Horims dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the Lord gave unto them' (Deut. ii. 12). The English leaves on a reader's mind the impression that a considerable time had elapsed since Israel had conquered the land of his possession. Nine Hebrew words contain, or are believed to contain, this idea in its fullest extent. Even though this were true, it might be but a proof of editing by a loving disciple, not the handiwork of the first author. For these nine words hang loose from the rest of the text, and can be separated without the slightest injury to the life of the passage. But the

<sup>1</sup> The passages expressly defined are—Deut. i. 1, 5; iii. 8, 25; iv. 41, 46, 47; xi. 30; Josh. i. 15; ii. 10; v. 1; ix. 1, 10; xii. 1, 7; xiii. 8: and those undefined are—Deut. iii. 20; Josh. i. 14; vii. 7; xxii. 4; xxiv. 8. Bleek's (Wellhausen's) treatment of the phrase, § 19 (81), shows how completely the meaning has been missed through dogmatic prejudice.

Hebrew text does not warrant the English translation. The phrase 'land of his possession' is used not of Western Palestine, which Joshua conquered after Moses' death, but of the kingdom of Sihon and Og, which Moses himself conquered in the last year of his life (Deut. iii. 20 ; Josh. i. 15, xii. 6). Most justly, therefore, might the lawgiver use the phrase in his last speech to the people. But the descendants of Esau were dwelling at that time in the land which their fathers won from the Horims. Accordingly the words ought to be rendered, in accordance with the genius of the Hebrew tongue: 'And the children of Esau are dwelling in their stead, as Israel is doing unto the land of his possession, which the Lord has given unto them.' The context proves the accuracy of this rendering. 'Behold,' it is said a few lines afterwards (Deut. ii. 24), 'I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: *begin ; possess.*' The beginning of the conquest is the point insisted on by the writer of Deuteronomy, not its completion, of which he could have known nothing. There is thus nothing in the passage which Moses himself may not have written during his own lifetime.

Attempts have been made to establish a most damaging discrepancy between the passover of Exodus (xii. 1-51) and that of Deuteronomy (xvi. 1-8). While the latter is supposed to tell the real truth, the former is regarded as a dressed-up story, invented many generations later. But Josiah is also believed to have followed the rules laid down in Deuteronomy, when he kept the great passover of his reign (2 Kings xxiii. 21-23). In that case the manifestly incomplete law which he used could have stood him in little stead as a guide to a correct observance of the feast. On almost every point he must have been at a loss what to do. And his terror, lest he should commit a breach of anything 'written in the book of this covenant,' was too sincere to allow of liberties being taken by way of supplementing its



numerous omissions. All this is overlooked in eagerness to work out a theory of word-slips similar to those already considered. The writer of Deuteronomy regards the passover as a seven days' feast, beginning, as the Hebrew day began, at sunset on the fourteenth day of Abib. Unleavened bread only could be eaten during the week; but the paschal lamb was the first and the greatest, though not the only sacrifice offered. Other victims from the flock and the herd were slain. Express mention is made of them in two feasts, of which records have been preserved (2 Chron. xxx. 17, xxxv. 7, 8, 9, 13). They were called 'passovers,' or 'passover offerings,' a word which occurs in the plural only four times, and never refers to the paschal lamb. Thousands of bullocks were thus offered, and more thousands of sheep. Parts of these victims were burned on the altar; parts were boiled and eaten by priests and people. The paschal lamb with which the feast began could only be roasted; 'the passovers' might be and were boiled; the former required to be a lamb or a kid, the latter might be oxen as well. Deuteronomy tells the same story as Chronicles. The extreme brevity of the narrative unhappily leaves uncertainty on the meaning, but no uncertainty on its historical accuracy. 'Observe the month of Abib,' it says, 'and keep passover to the Lord thy God,' employing the usual phrase, and not adding the article *the*, though it is inserted in our English version. Then the law-book proceeds: 'Thou shalt sacrifice [a] passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd: thou shalt eat no leavened bread upon it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread upon it' (Deut. xvi. 1-3). The paschal lamb was all eaten on the first night of the feast. None of it was left till the morning. Unleavened bread could not, therefore, be eaten on it for seven days; but that bread could be eaten on 'the passovers,' as the other sacrifices of the feast were called, or on 'a passover of the flock and the herd,' according to the law quoted above. The dis-

inction thus drawn between the paschal lamb, slain and eaten at the beginning of the feast, and 'the passovers,' or paschal offerings slain during the whole week, enables us to understand what would otherwise be perplexing.

The next section of the passover law in Deuteronomy is made by Bishop Colenso to say what it does not say. 'Deuteronomy orders that they shall *boil* the passover,' he writes, 'instead of eating it, roast with fire, as it is expressly ordered in Exodus.'<sup>1</sup> *Boiling* the passover, instead of *roasting* it, is a most serious view to take. The word is regarded as a slip, or a leakage, which reveals a truth that would otherwise be unknown. But both Bishop Colenso and those from whom he quotes have assumed the accuracy of their own statement without regarding the original. The writer of Deuteronomy says no such thing. Whether the word used by him means *boil*, as it generally does, or *roast*, as it does once at least (2 Chron. xxxv. 13), is not of the smallest consequence. He does not say what his critics charge him with saying. His words are: 'There thou shalt sacrifice the passover (the article is used) at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. And thou shalt boil [*or* roast] and eat in the place which the Lord shall choose; and thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents.' Not a word is said about what they were to boil and eat. The Greek translation, made about 250 B.C., might have kept these critics from falling into this blunder. It shows the full meaning of the word which they insist on rendering *boil*, and avoids the mistake of limiting the thing eaten to the paschal lamb. 'Thou shalt boil,' it says, 'and roast, and eat,' but it adds no more. By it, as well as by the Hebrew, the whole boiling and eating of, it may be, thousands of sheep and oxen during the feast are clearly embraced in the brief statement made. If not, the next clause, 'Thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents,' is un-

<sup>1</sup> Part vi. 413-419.

intelligible, for the words clearly point to the end of the seven days' feast. Sorely pressed by this difficulty, the Bishop gives up his case by representing 'the whole body of Israelites present, killing, boiling, and eating the flesh of the victims together in the Temple Court, feasting all night, and "returning to their tents," *i.e.* to their homes or lodgings, "in the morning."' If this scene had been a fact, and not a sketch from fancy, there would have been no need for debates on the historical character of the Pentateuch. Fortunately the fires, the pots, the pans, the night feast continued till morning in the temple court, are creatures of the imagination.

Among the greater slips or forgeries which the advocates of the new theory profess to have discovered are, *first*, the law of the central altar, at which alone acceptable sacrifice could be offered (Deut. xii. 1-32); and *second*, the law of the king (Deut. xvii. 14-20). A central altar is held to be in flat contradiction to the history as it unfolded itself in the seven centuries from Moses to Hezekiah. A thing, which was impossible at the beginning of these centuries, came within the sphere of practical statecraft at the end. Gradually, too, as it is said, there arose the idea that by no other means could the nation be saved from heathenism and ruin—a conclusion which few, save the initiated, can see any reason for drawing from the facts of history. Such, however, is the theory. Zion is not mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy. It is, however, said to be referred to. Some of the critics regard the references to it as beyond reasonable doubt. But they overlook one fact. Ebal and Gerizim are named in the book: why should not the author have named Jerusalem also? No reason can be assigned for this silence, except his ignorance of the place which the city was destined to fill in the nation's annals. To ascribe it to design, is to make his guilt in attempting to deceive the people double-dyed. And between ignorance and design there is here no alternative.

The former is a proof of his truthfulness; the latter is evidence of fraud practised under the guise of virtue.

Those who refuse to recognise in the central altar of Solomon a revival of a thing which once flourished in Israel, but had been fallen from for a season, explain a lesser difficulty by shutting their eyes on others much greater. It is their first duty to face the proof already given of the acquaintance shown by Samuel with the very passages in Deuteronomy, which they affirm were the growth of later feeling and a later age. By laying a false foundation we may build the facts of history into a flimsy structure; but when building on a sound foundation, we often find facts which seem too angular to fit in with other regularly-squared stones. Advocates of the forgery theory are, at the outset, in the former case, unless they rebut the evidence adduced to show Samuel's acquaintance with the fifth book of Moses. If that evidence is beyond reasonable dispute, we are in the latter case. In other words, the task before them resolves itself into attempting the impossible; that before their opponents is nothing more serious than the removal of, it may be, a historical difficulty. Every historian has to face in his narrative things which he cannot account for, or set in a proper light, while he is certain that half a dozen lines from a dead actor in the great drama, or from a now for ever silent speaker, would completely resolve the puzzle. The want of a few words has given birth to volumes, and even to libraries, of learned writing, as worthless as much of the paper with which Omar allowed the baths of Alexandria to be heated, when his generals asked directions about the literary treasures of its famous library.

It is possible, however, to trace still farther in the language of the book of Samuel the influence of words and ideas from the Deuteronomic law of the central altar. While the former fills above one hundred pages, and was written in 980 B.C., the latter covers a couple of pages, and was composed

in 1450 B.C. The influence of the two pages on the hundred pages does not seem to admit of doubt.

DEUT. xii. 12.

*(Law of central altar.)*

The Levite that is within your gates ; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

2 SAM. xx. 1.

Sheba-ben-Bichri blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse : every man to his tents, O Israel.

The peculiarity in this case is that the Pentateuch and Samuel are the only books which contain the phrase *no part nor inheritance*.<sup>1</sup> Manifestly the writer of the one repeated a saying first published by the other. But Sheba-ben-Bichri was quoting something very well known to his followers, while he was giving it more force by infusing into it a little of his own, adapted to the times. When he added, ‘Every man to his tents, O Israel,’ he was again quoting a form of speech found for the first time in the book of Deuteronomy. The indebtedness of Sheba to the fifth book of Moses is at least made probable from his use of these two phrases.

DEUT. xii. 15.

*(Law of central altar.)*

Thou mayest (kill) sacrifice and eat flesh in all thy gates, with all desire of thy soul.

1 SAM. xxiii. 20.

And now, according to all desire of thy soul, O king, to come down, come, and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand.

‘All desire of the soul’ is a phrase which occurs only five times altogether in the Old Testament,—three times in the central altar law, once in another related passage of Deuteronomy (the law of the Levites), and once in Samuel. Other two places have the unusual word for desire (Hos. x. 10 ; Jer. ii. 24). The evidence of borrowing in Samuel from Deuteronomy increases when several phrases and sayings are brought together in this way. One singular word or phrase might be refused, if it stood alone ; but when it is strengthened by others, the circumstantial evidence rapidly assumes the dimensions of a

<sup>1</sup> See Gen. xxxi. 14 ; Num. xviii. 20. Similar passages are—Josh. xviii. 7, xxii. 25, 27 ; 1 Kings xii. 16 ; 2 Chron. x. 16.

demonstration. The corresponding verb to this noun *desire* is more frequently read, but even with it there is something peculiar in the two books.

DEUT. xii. 20.

(*Law of central altar.*)

When thou shalt say I will eat flesh, because thy soul desireth (longeth) to eat flesh; with all desire of thy soul thou mayest eat flesh.

1 SAM. ii. 16, 12.

If any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and take as thy soul desireth.

[In 2 Sam. iii. 21, 'Whatsoever thy soul desireth' is from Deut. xiv. 26.]

There is one reference in the second passage quoted above from Samuel, which, though it has no bearing on the central altar law, shows unmistakeable indebtedness to Deuteronomy. It helps materially to strengthen the argument. When the treacherous Ziphites proposed to betray David to Saul, 'our part,' they said, 'shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.' We can best understand their wickedness by turning to Nabal's words (1 Sam. xxv. 10): 'There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master,' and comparing them with the law of the fugitive (Deut. xxiii. 15): 'Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee.' Saul was an over-lord or master; David was his servant (1 Sam. xxii. 8). By the law-book it was forbidden to deliver up the fugitive to his superior. Bad-hearted though Nabal was, he did not attempt to break this law. But the Ziphites set it at defiance. The words of the law, 'to deliver unto his master,' are almost the same as those used by the treacherous villagers, *to deliver him into the king's hand*. The historian's purpose clearly is to bring into a strong light the black-heartedness of these people towards the innocent fugitive. Not only did they veil treachery under the guise of friendly hospitality, but they also violated a well-known and most kindly law of their great legislator. For Hebrew law forbade the delivering up of political refugees to their master. The treaty entered into between Rameses II. of Egypt and the great king of the Hittites, during or not long before the time of Moses, made special arrangements for the

surrender of these fugitives. The Pentateuch seems as if it condemned the arrangements.

With these similarities of word and phrase before us, it is comparatively an easy task to meet the historical difficulty connected with the central altar law of Deuteronomy. That it may not be under-estimated, we shall state it in the words of a school which places it in the strongest possible light. 'It is quite certain,' they say, 'that Samuel, with all his zeal for Jehovah, made no attempt to bring back this scattered worship to forms of legal orthodoxy. He continued to sacrifice at a variety of shrines, and his yearly circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, returning to Ramah, involved the recognition of all these altars (1 Sam. x. 3; xi. 15; vii. 6, 9; ix. 12).' The scattered worship referred to is thus described: 'On every occasion of national importance the people assemble and do service at some local sanctuary, as at Mizpah (1 Sam. vii. 6, 9), or at Gilgal (x. 8; xi. 15; xiii. 4, 9, etc.). The seats of authority are sanctuaries, Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal (vii. 16, 17, comp. x. 3), Beersheba (viii. 2, comp. Amos v. 5, viii. 14), Hebron (2 Sam. ii. 1, xv. 12). Saul builds altars (1 Sam. xiv. 35). Samuel can make a dangerous visit most colourably by visiting a local sanctuary like Bethlehem with an offering in his hand (1 Sam. xvi.); and in some of these places there are annual sacrificial feasts (1 Sam. xx. 6). At the same time the ark is settled on the hill (Gibeah) at Kirjath-jearim, where Eleazar-ben-Abinadab was consecrated its priest (1 Sam. vii. 1). The priests of the house of Eli were at Nob, where there was a regular sanctuary with shew-bread, and no less than eighty-five priests wearing a linen ephod (1 Sam. xxii. 18).'<sup>1</sup> These are the principal statements to be considered. They involve an assumption, which is expressly disallowed in the history. It is, that wherever an

<sup>1</sup> Bleek, § 62, (124), and Graf, *G. B.* 31, 32, state the difficulty more carefully. And Bishop Colenso (Part vii. 129) is also clearer. The quotation in the text is from Smith, *O. T.*, p. 261.

altar is mentioned, a sacrifice was offered. But an altar was allowed to be built as a memorial, and 'not for burnt-offering nor for sacrifice' (Josh. xxii. 26). How often this was done is now unknown. However, the fact is beyond dispute; and it is a fact which deprives of much of its force the reasoning based on some parts of the history.

Words and phrases are used in these two extracts to which no definite meaning can be attached. If the sanctuary spoken of as existing at Nob was a *regular* sanctuary, some or all of the others previously spoken of may have been *irregular*. No other meaning can be given to the use of the word. But in that case the theory itself is surrendered by its own advocates, for they recognise no distinction of the kind. Eleazar is also said to have been consecrated as priest of the ark. The authority given for this view is: 'The men of Kirjath-jearim sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord.' Not a word is uttered about priest or priest's office in this passage. On the contrary, 'to keep the charge,' or 'to keep the keeping' of, is a phrase used of Levites as well as priests. 'Their charge,' or 'their keeping shall be the ark,' is specially said of the Kohathite Levites. 'To keep the ark' can not be twisted into meaning 'to be made a priest.' Were that the case, the townsfolk of Kirjath-jearim, which was neither a priestly nor a Levitical city, exercised the right of making men priests. With the same readiness to overlook the meaning of words, Hebron is pronounced a sanctuary like Bethel, apparently because Absalom 'sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices.' Absalom seems to have been the sacrificer, and Hebron the place, though Bishop Colenso considers Giloh the place and Ahithophel the offerer (vii. 129, 135). But however that point may be decided, the words, 'he sacrificed sacrifices,' do not mean the peace-offerings or atoning sacrifices of the temple service. 'He slaughtered beasts for a feast' is clearly the meaning, which the circumstances of Absalom



require the words to bear. He had taken two hundred chief men from Jerusalem with him; people were pouring in on all sides; and a great feast was a necessity at the beginning of a new reign. Absalom was slaughtering cattle and sheep for his guests and partisans. He is said to have sacrificed sacrifices, a phrase which is borrowed here and elsewhere in Samuel from the law of a central altar laid down in Deuteronomy. Adonijah at a later period imitated this proceeding of his rebel brother. Like him, he 'sacrificed,' that is, slew 'sheep and oxen' for a kingly feast at Zoheleth. Deuteronomic words and laws meet us at every step we take in this inquiry, compelling the recognition of that book as an older piece of writing than Samuel or any section of the Kings. Absalom was not acting the part of priest at Hebron. He was aping the king in entertaining at a coronation feast the crowds who were flocking to his support. Sacrificing of popular sacrifices was allowed by law in these circumstances in any corner of the land. But even though Absalom be thought to have assumed the office of priest, nothing is proved. He was not acting lawfully in a single step he took. He was engaged in the wickedest undertaking ever set on foot. Although he began by sanctifying his crimes with a show of religious zeal, we cannot learn from his hypocrisy what the true religion of the land really was. He pleased the worst and the most unsteady of the people. He did not please the wisest and the best. Hebron, then, has not been shown to be 'a local sanctuary,' if by that term be meant a corner of the land in which acceptable priestly sacrifices could be offered.

The proof given for regarding Beersheba as an authorized local sanctuary also breaks down on a closer examination. The witness-texts quoted in support have nothing to say in the case. At Bethlehem, again, a sacrifice was held by the Prophet Samuel. But no attempt is made to discover the nature of the sacrifice. Was it a priestly sacrifice—a burnt-offering or a peace-offering? As a feast followed, it may have

been the latter; it could scarcely have been the former. Or was it a popular sacrifice in the same sense as Absalom's sacrifices and Adonijah's? The law of the central altar expressly allowed this kind to be slain in any part of the land. By distinguishing priestly or atoning sacrifices from popular or festive, as the lawgiver did, we put ourselves back in the position of men who lived in Samuel's time, and may see with their eyes, if we will but hear with their ears. David's family had a sacrifice in Bethlehem perhaps every year. We have no right to regard it as other than popular, a victim slain for a family feast, and eaten according to the rules laid down in the central altar law. All these offerings, whether atoning or festive, had a sacredness thrown round them which is seen in the law-book, and in the necessity of sanctifying the celebrants. But this sanctifying must not be pressed too far. When it is mentioned for the first time, it obviously refers to very simple things, such as the laying aside of all work, and the putting on of holiday attire: 'Moses sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes.' The central altar law, then, allowed these popular sacrifices at Hebron, at Bethlehem, and at any town or village. But it never exalted them to the dignity of atoning offerings presented on the national altar at Shiloh, at Nob, or before the ark. This distinction between priestly and popular sacrifices is neither new nor doubtful. It has always been acknowledged. Of late years, however, it seems to have been overlooked, and the part which it plays in the history has been lost sight of. We shall return to it more fully in our discussion of the divisions in the priestly tribe.

The reference to Saul's altars is of no value in this inquiry. As the ark was with him when he built the first and only one of his altars, with which we are acquainted, his act was justifiable. Sacrifice in its highest form could also have been offered in strictest agreement with the law, for the high priest was at his side. But it is impossible to say what the

altar which he then built was really intended for. Victims were slain beside it which were used for a feast and a feast only. There is nothing to show that any other victims were then slain or offered. Priestly or atoning sacrifices are merely inferred because an altar is mentioned. But there is good ground for disputing this large inference from a word, this filling up of a blank in the history from our own imagination. We now return to the first of the extracts given above; apart from it, the second yields nothing sure or definite.

Samuel, it is said, sacrificed at a variety of shrines, and recognised the altars at Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpeh, and Ramah. Five references are given in proof. The first and the third<sup>1</sup> say nothing whatever about sacrifice or altar. We dismiss them as yielding no result. The second says, 'He sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the Lord in Gilgal;' the fourth gives 'a burnt-offering,' with the phrase 'before the Lord' supplied; and the fifth recounts a sacrificial feast; but whether the sacrifice was priestly or popular cannot be determined. The evidence for many altars, many shrines, many sacrifices, is thus seen to shrivel up into small dimensions. Nor is that all. However lightly the phrase 'before the Lord' may be skipped over, it may carry with it a meaning destructive of the whole theory. If it be equal to 'before the ark,' the great condition of allowable sacrifice may have been satisfied, and the theory under review suffers a serious if not a total eclipse.

Without adventuring into the region of what may be called conjecture by one side and historical fact by the other, let it be considered here to what poor support the theory has now been reduced. Nothing is known to be certainly in its favour except two instances of peace-offerings and burnt-offerings presented by Samuel at Gilgal and Mizpeh. A sacrifice by Jesse or Samuel at Bethlehem, or at Ramah by

<sup>1</sup> 'They drew water, and poured it out before the Lord.' See 2 Sam. xxiii. 16, when David poured out water 'unto the Lord.'

Samuel, or even at Hebron by Absalom, was not an infringement of the central altar law so far as history informs us. Special provision was made by that law for a certain kind of sacrifice at any spot in Palestine. We may even go further. Hebrew law did, in this respect, precisely the same thing as the custom of other nations allowed or enjoined. 'In Italy,' says Mommsen, 'as everywhere among agricultural tribes whose ordinary food consists of vegetables, the slaughter of cattle formed at once a household feast and an act of worship.'<sup>1</sup> A family feast in Bethlehem, or Ramah, or anywhere, thus became a sacrifice as well, and was so spoken of. But priestly offerings were unquestionably presented at Gilgal and Mizpeh in several cases. These examples also suggest the prevalence of a custom. They seem to justify the belief that priestly sacrifices were offered generally in many places. Even though this large inference be admitted, the peculiar phrase used in these two cases must not be overlooked, 'Before the Lord.' In our ignorance of those days, we may fall into the mistake of Amias Poulet with Mary of Scotland, if we build a theory on our own imperfect knowledge. Writing to Secretary Walsingham, that stern gaoler of the poor queen says: 'Curle's child remaining unchristened, and the priest removed before the arrival of this lady, she desired that my minister might baptize the child, . . . which being refused, she came shortly after into Curle's wife's chamber, where, laying the child on her knees, she took water out of a basin, and casting it on the face of the child, she said, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," calling the child by her own name, Mary. This may not be found strange in her who maketh no conscience to break all laws of God and man.'<sup>2</sup> Mary was justified by the law of her Church in doing as she did. If Sir Amias, then, in an England not thirty years escaped from the power of Rome, was so imperfectly

<sup>1</sup> *Hist.* Bk. I. xii. p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Morrice, *The Letter-Books of Sir Amias Poulet*, p. 276.

acquainted with its law, we who are writing and speaking of a very briefly recorded past, more than three thousand years since, may write and speak of laws then existing with equal confidence and equal ignorance.

The utmost, then, which results from these sacrifices of Samuel is a doubt in our minds, which we have not now the means of satisfactorily removing. And in this view of the matter we are confirmed by the handling it receives from a later writer, who admittedly knew the law of the central altar, and who regarded the neglect of that law as the chief cause of the nation's ruin. We refer to the author of the books of the Kings. Writing of Jehoshaphat, he says: 'He walked in all the way of Asa his father (he turned not aside from it), doing the right in the eyes of the Lord; nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; the people offered and burned incense yet in the high places' (1 Kings xxii. 43). This passage overflows with Deuteronomy. 'To do the right in the eyes of Jehovah' occurs only twice elsewhere in the Bible in the form in which it appears here (Deut. xiii. 18; 2 Chron. xx. 32): the original passage is in the fifth book of Moses. 'To walk in his ways' is a similar phrase.<sup>1</sup> And a third thing in the verse quoted from the Kings is the burning of incense by the people, a priestly duty which Samuel is never said to have discharged. The worship of the people on the high places was a revival of that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. We are not at liberty to call it idolatry, at least in this instance. The people professed to worship Jehovah, even as these wilderness rebels had professed to do. But the burning of incense by the people and by Korah's company was a usurpation of the priests' office. Sacrifice might have been liable to a misunderstanding. A law-breaker might have pretended to offer a popular sacrifice on a high place, when he was really offering a priestly or atoning sacrifice; but the burning of incense was the usurpation of a priestly and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings viii. 58 is a quotation from Deut. x. 12 or xi. 22.

specially reserved right, which he could not explain away. Nor is Samuel ever said to have exercised the right. This silence of the historian is remarkable; for the only passages in the prophet's life which make mention of incense, assign the offering of it to the sons of the high priest. The contrast between Samuel and the people in Jehoshaphat's reign, in regard to this right of the priests, is too clear not to convey an obvious meaning. The people were usurping the priests' office, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did. Samuel was following the example of Moses, as the circumstances of his time, without farther reason, entitled him to do.

In the passage quoted above the writer of the Kings condemns worship on high places. But about ten pages before he records a great sacrifice on a high place. He speaks of it as one of the greatest acts of worship ever held. It was transacted in sight of king, nobles, and people. It was sealed with the approval of heaven in ways wondrous and most unusual. And it was so overpowering in its effects on all who were witnesses of the scene, that, while many assisted at the death of 450 court favourites, not one seems to have made an effort to save their lives. But the author of the history recounts this amazing scene—this violation, so to speak, of the central altar law—almost in the same breath with his repeated condemnation of worship on high places. He was well acquainted with that law. Times without number he quotes the book in which it is found. His whole writing is incensed with the charm of its words and its thoughts. To say that he condemns breaches of this law as the cause of his country's ruin, and yet exalted one of them as among the greatest acts of acceptable worship ever offered, is to pronounce him uncommonly foolish. But he was neither foolish nor ignorant. The ignorance is on our side, not on his. Having the life of Samuel and the law of the central altar both before him, he knew perfectly what we may discover only in part, that the prophet was as well aware of that

law as we are. And what was true of Samuel was true also of Elijah.

Put the case now in its most favourable light for the new theory. Allow that Samuel did offer priestly sacrifices at Gilgal and Mizpeh; allow also that the offerer was Samuel himself, and not a priest carrying out his orders; allow further, that 'before the Lord' has no special meaning in these cases, and that the ark was not then with the Hebrew people. These are large concessions. No one can ask more, and no one is warranted in granting so much. But even then the case is not one whit the worse for the legislation in Deuteronomy. Shiloh had been laid desolate with a desolation which men regarded then and for ages afterwards as the curse of heaven on the place. Nob, though the choice of the priests, had never been generally reckoned a seat of the central altar, and seems never to have been a residence of the ark. Samuel is nowhere said to have visited it, or to have sanctioned the priests' choice, or in any way to have indicated approval of the place. Had he shown a disposition to treat Nob as a second Shiloh, it is incredible that he should have allowed the ark to remain at Kirjath while the tabernacle was pitched at Nob. A fact so singular indicates a purpose. Nob was not designed to be a second Shiloh: it was not to be a seat of the central altar. While Samuel goes in yearly circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh; while his own home is at Ramah; while he directs the chosen king to repair to Gilgal, and then summons the people to meet at Mizpeh, there is not one word allowed to fall from him which would even seem to countenance Nob. Nor does he appear turning aside a mile or two from the straight road to visit either Nob or the tabernacle. The silence is remarkable. Annual feasts and annual gatherings were held at Shiloh in Samuel's childhood; at Gilgal and at Mizpeh he held national gatherings in his manhood and in his old age; but Nob is carefully shunned, as if it were a place designedly omitted from his thoughts and his life. The new theory gives

no explanation of this remarkable silence. Its advocates see the dislocation in the history, but pass it by on the other side.

To us, who regard the central law as having then been in existence, these facts cause no difficulty. Shiloh was become a curse; Nob was not recognised; the high priest's family was doomed to shame; the whole Levitical system was in a state of suspended animation. That system may be said to have been in some respects abrogated for the time. Israel was somewhat in the same position as in the days of the Maccabees, nine centuries afterwards—the temple profaned, the altar polluted, the ever-burning lamps gone out, the law trodden under foot; and in both cases the Hebrews looked for the same way of escape from surrounding dangers: they were waiting till a prophet arose, who should tell them what to do. Samuel, the prophet, indicated to his countrymen the path of duty. He showed them that they must fall back on the patriarchal worship of their forefathers, till they learned more fully what should be done for the revival of the Levitical system. With the Maccabees events shaped themselves more quickly and more in agreement with the ancient law. Time unfolding itself was their prophet; for no Samuel arose to guide their footsteps, eagerly though they prayed for a prophet to come to their help. On one point even time failed to be a guide. The ever-burning flame of the candlestick and the altar had gone out in the desecrated temple; how should they re-light the fire? An answer to this question must be found before the temple worship could again proceed. We are told of the way of deliverance from this perplexity; we cannot doubt the reality of the story. 'Having cleansed the temple, they made another altar; and striking stones, they took fire out of them, and offered sacrifice after two years, and set forth incense, and lights, and shewbread' (2 Macc. x. 3). Where a prophet was wanting, common sense was present. But in Samuel's time there were both prophet and common sense. Each of them said: Fall back on the worship of



patriarchal times, so far as places of sacrifice are concerned, till events determine what more must be done. Or both of them said: Revert to the wilderness worship before the wandering ark, and the ever-shifting brazen altar. Samuel's burnt-offerings and peace-offerings are explained and justified on these elementary principles. But he never offered the incense, which it was death for any save a son of Aaron to go in and offer to God; while, in striking contrast to this, the re-lighting of the altar fire in the days of the Maccabees was immediately followed by the 'setting forth of incense.'

Under the Levitical law there was thus a dispensing power, of which the existence has been unreasonably denied. In several well-known cases we see it in operation, once by direct command, and frequently by a breach of law having been condoned. The first case was the permission to observe passover in the second month instead of the first. Here the dispensing power was directly exercised by God, and afterwards taken advantage of by Hezekiah (Num. ix. 9-14; 2 Chron. xxx. 2). The second example was more singular. Aaron, the high priest, exercised a dispensing power in his own case without consulting Moses, who, indignant at first, cooled down on hearing his brother's reason, and allowed the justice of his procedure (Lev. x. 16-20). In the same way the dispensing power must have been exercised, *first*, when the rite of circumcision was not performed during the wilderness wanderings; *next*, when the passover was celebrated in Canaan, at Gilgal, by Joshua; and *again*, when Rahab was exempted with all her kindred from the doom of her heathen people (Josh. v. 5-10; vi. 17). Ahimelech, the high priest, also exercised the power, in special circumstances, of giving David bread which none but priests were allowed to eat. Mercy, and not judgment, was the ground of this action. But a dispensing power once admitted, as it must be, explains the sacrifices of Gideon and Manoah, of Samuel and Elijah. It permitted them to fall back on the simpler worship of the

earliest times. Of its existence in more recent days there is abundant evidence. At first the patriots, who fled from the Syrian persecution in 168 B.C., refused to engage in battle or to defend themselves on the Sabbath. Many valuable lives were lost, and the nation itself would have been ruined by this mistaken obedience to the law had not the error been seen and rectified. In the same way Judith, in her speech to Holofernes, exhibits very plainly the views current at perhaps an earlier time. Speaking of her own people, she said: 'Their victuals fail them, and all their water is scant, and they have determined to lay hands on their cattle, and purposed to consume all those things that God hath forbidden them to eat by His laws; and are resolved to consume the first-fruits of the corn, and the tenths of wine and oil, which they had sanctified and reserved for the priests that serve in Jerusalem before the face of our God: the which things it is not lawful for any of the people so much as to touch with their hands; for they have sent to Jerusalem, because they also which dwell there have done the like, to bring them a licence from the senate' (Judith xi. 12-14). What they called a *licence* we are speaking of as a *dispensing power*.

We now come to the law of the king (Deut. xvii. 14-20). It forbids the people to choose a foreigner to that office. It also forbids the king chosen to trust on or to imitate Egypt, to multiply wives to himself, or to forget 'the book of this law.' By the advocates of the new theory, these regulations are held to be at variance with the story of Saul's election by Samuel. They are also said to be a fancy picture of the true king, in contrast to the picture painted by history of what Solomon was as a bad king, when he fell away from the ancient faith. That fancy sketch is said to have been drawn for the people in this forged book of Deuteronomy about 700 B.C. A popular history of the reign of Solomon is thus assumed to have then been in circulation among the Hebrews, ages before the present book of the Kings was published.

What that history was no one knows. No trace of it exists. The theory, then, is this: Three centuries after Solomon's death, a prophet is thought to have written an ideal law-book of the kingdom, taken from the blunders and follies of his court as they were known in a now unknown popular history. He ascribed it to a lawgiver five centuries earlier than Solomon, and counted on the world believing his novel or forgery a sober piece of law, intended for the guidance of Hebrews long before a king reigned in their country. Many critics accept this theory. Some even decline to allow in the writer of the book an intention to deceive his readers. They say his object was good and innocent. But the intention cannot be denied without denying the use and the meaning of words. Acceptance of the theory seems to be one thing here, belief in it another. Before it had been heard of on the Continent, and long before it crossed over into Britain, Coleridge had weighed it in the balances of common sense, never dreaming in the possibility of the theory being given to his countrymen as a philosophy of Hebrew history. 'One striking proof of the genuineness of the Mosaic books is this,' he said; 'they contain precise prohibitions, by way of predicting the consequences of disobedience, of all those things which David and Solomon actually did and gloried in doing—raising cavalry, making a treaty with Egypt, laying up treasure, and polygamizing. Now, would such prohibitions have been fabricated in those kings' reigns, or afterwards? Impossible!'<sup>1</sup>

The ground of the alleged opposition between this law of the king and Saul's election to the throne, does not lie in the language of the two pieces, but in the thing itself. For the words and ideas found in the story of the people asking a king from Samuel are words and ideas peculiar to Deuteronomy. The similarity between the two is surprising. All thinkers now recognise this fact. But some of them believe that the

<sup>1</sup> *Table Talk*, p. 79.

real book of Samuel, the first edition copy, did not show this similarity in language. Slowly they began to adopt the idea that a late reviser had tampered with the original book of Samuel, and by adding words and phrases in a number of places, had produced in a very late second edition the similarity we now observe. Beginning with small researches of this kind, they have recently extended their discoveries to an alarming degree. Verses, sections, and even a whole chapter are branded as a reviser's work of addition. What his work of subtraction may have been the world can never discover now. A criticism which bases extraordinary historical results on a theory so far beyond the reach of proof is satisfactory, inasmuch as it brings its own conclusions into ridicule. No fault, then, can be found with the language of the law of the king in Deuteronomy. Exception is taken only to the fact.

Let us, however, take a somewhat broader view of the law. If it really was given about 1450 B.C., while a king was not chosen till 1100 B.C., something would probably happen in the interval to bridge across that wide gap, displaying a knowledge of the law in the life and speech of the people. Moses himself is called *a king* in the law-book, and he exercised all a king's duties without parading any of his outward state. His successor, Joshua, was also a king in everything but the name. From his death onward, no trace of the law is discernible till we come to the judgeship of Gideon, about 1200 B.C. The story then runs: 'The men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also, for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.' No one would think of questioning the credibility of this story, unless he had a theory to maintain. A few years ago the antiquity of the book of Judges, and its freedom from the tampering by revisers, which other books were thought to

show, were allowed by fair-minded scholars.<sup>1</sup> These days are past. The writer of Deuteronomy or one of his followers has been at work even here; and for a reason too flimsy to be worth stating, the passage regarding Gideon and the kingdom is declared to be *probably* an insertion by his hand. Reasoning is powerless against this way of proceeding. No weapon can be wielded against it but ridicule, for which there are too many justifiable openings in this debated cause.

The law of the king, given in Deuteronomy, was not forgotten in after time. It comes to the front in Gideon's judgeship as a living thing, thought over, talked about among the people, and ready to be acted on. But Gideon refuses the honour. He does not condemn the people for making an unlawful request. He merely puts the kingship aside as an honour he would not take, but not as an honour which his countrymen had no right to offer. The law continued to be talked of among the people. They felt they were entitled to do as they had done in offering him the throne. They felt, also, that they were entitled to offer it to his family. At least, as soon as Gideon died, his worst and boldest son expected to see supreme power bestowed on his brothers, while he himself, as unworthily born, would be shut out. By murdering all of them except Jotham, he seized, or thought to seize, the prize which his father put aside when it was offered as a free gift. Undoubtedly the minds of men were then familiar with the idea of a king for Israel. Although it came to the surface only in the days of Gideon and Samuel, it lay deep in the nation's heart, and may have burst forth in other cases. Of this we have ground for suspicion in the song of Hannah, more than fifty years before the choice of Saul: 'The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them; the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; the Lord shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed' (1 Sam. ii. 10). Instead of

<sup>1</sup> Bleek, 2d ed. § 145.

regarding these words as an utterance of the nation's deepest feelings, modern thinkers take the superficial view, that they could not have been spoken by a poet, unless a king had then been ruling in Israel. On the supposition that Hannah, like the elders in her son's old age, was only expressing the people's deep yearnings for a champion to deliver them from priestly vileness within and foreign thralldom without, there would be room for poetry such as breathes in her song; while it is difficult to see what she or they had to do with a king sitting on his throne. Hope gilded the future in her eyes with a coming glory, in contrast to the baseness which she saw around her in Eli's sons, and in the incapacity of the national chiefs. A king on his throne in actual life is seldom known to have inspired the people with these hopes. Since, then, Hannah's song was about half-way in point of time between Gideon's judgeship and the choice of Saul, a bridge is thus found existing across the gulf of centuries, from Joshua's death to the beginning of Saul's reign. The idea of a king ruling over the land never was dead among the Hebrews. Specially in times of trouble and discontent would it come to the surface; possibly it came up in their history many more times than are recorded in their books. We have therefore safe ground to go on, in declining to regard the idea as new in Samuel's judgeship. At least he was well aware that the people had the will of Jehovah on their side, for, in his view of the case, they were only rejecting himself as judge. Until it was pointed out to him, he never imagined they were rejecting Jehovah as their king.

There is an addition made to the story of Gideon's life, which has a direct bearing on the Deuteronomic law of the king: 'He had many wives' (Judg. viii. 30). The Hebrew words used are practically the same as, 'Neither shall he multiply wives to himself' (Deut. xvii. 17). But the new theory sees in the latter words an unmistakeable allusion to Solomon's ways as king. That law was invented, it says,

three hundred years after his time, to prevent a repetition of the sins which he fell into. But while the language of the law is wanting in the history of Solomon's reign, it is found in the story of Gideon's life. Long before the reign of Josiah, the latter had been circulating in writing among the people. There is no proof that the history of Solomon had then been published as a book for popular reading. Gideon's case, therefore, is more agreeable to the Deuteronomic invention, as the theory regards it, than Solomon's. The crown was offered to him; great disasters befell the nation because of the women he married; the words of the law occur in the story of his life. Solomon had many wives; but so had Gideon, and so had Solomon's father and several of Solomon's sons. The theory is therefore as well, if not better, satisfied by referring the law to Gideon than to Solomon. It is also made more absurd, that is, it is disproved.

Another link, which is believed to connect the Deuteronomic law with Solomon, is found in the prohibition of an Egyptian alliance: 'He shall not cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses' (Deut. xvii. 16). The words were appropriate to Israel's circumstances in the time of Moses; they were not appropriate in the time of Josiah or Hezekiah. Horses were unknown in the Hebrew camp during the wilderness wanderings. Egypt was then the market which could supply them, as the Hebrews well knew. But the way thither was barred by divine command. No commerce with that country was allowed, not even to procure horses for war. The prohibition was therefore most appropriate. On the other hand, it has no meaning if the book was written in Hezekiah's time, and if the prohibition was intended for a censure on Solomon. David, not Solomon, was the first to add a chariot force to the Hebrew army: 'David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots' (2 Sam. viii. 4). Nor were Solomon's chariots so numerous as those of inferior kings, who followed him in

Israel. While he had 1400 chariots for show more than use, Ahab had 2000 at least for use and not for show. Because Solomon's merchants brought droves of horses from Egypt, Deuteronomy is supposed to have condemned this traffic as the source of the nation's backsliding and ruin. The people of Israel are assumed to have been as well acquainted with it as the critics themselves. But the book which mentions this trade was not written for a century after the time, when the theory supposes Deuteronomy to have been published. So far, then, as we are aware, the people of Israel, in Hezekiah's reign, could have known nothing of Solomon's horse traffic. Hence the alleged hit at his droves of horses loses its whole point, and the critic's argument its whole force. Illustrations of a baseless theory may be so presented to the world as to offer a fair show of soundness to the unthinking; but on being turned round and examined on all sides, they reveal shortcomings too serious to deceive even the least observant.

But the horses of Egypt did not stand out as an objectionable feature to the circle of prophets who flourished during and after Hezekiah's reign. The new theory is at once shorn of its strength, unless this view of Egypt as a market for horses at that time can be substantiated. Prophecy and history both declare it unfounded. And their testimony is decisive. Isaiah, the great prophet of Hezekiah's court, seems as if he had the Mosaic law of the kingdom in view when he wrote: 'Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots; their land also is full of idols,'—the idols being a result of what precedes (Isa. ii. 7). Palestine, then, was full of horses at the very time when a prophet is supposed to have forbidden the king to multiply horses or to go to Egypt for them. So much, then, for the testimony of prophecy. History is equally clear. The very name for horses in Egypt was borrowed from the Hebrew-speaking races. Even the word for *coachman* in the



Nile Valley was the same as the Hebrew word, and owed its existence there to the Hebrew tongue.<sup>1</sup> During Solomon's time, Egypt, instead of importing horses from Syria, was one of several markets for buyers. But in Hezekiah's reign, horses abounded in Palestine. A century before, they were so numerous that Ahab sent 2000 chariots into the field.<sup>2</sup> The evidence against the theory furnished by history and prophecy is thus complete. A fanciful interpretation of the law of the king, and a fanciful application of a piece of history, published after the monarchy had fallen, are the supports on which alone it leans.

There is acknowledged to be one difficulty about this theory of a reference to Solomon's court in the law of the king—'one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.' There is no meaning in these words, if the law was a picture of what should be, painted from that which should not have been but actually existed in Solomon's time. On that point there is no difference of opinion. An attempt has, however, been made to evade the difficulty by regarding it as a reference to the plot, formed several years before, to put the son of Tabeal on the throne of Judah instead of Ahaz (Isa. vii. 6). The kings of Syria and Israel invaded Judah with this object in view. Perhaps Ben-Tabeal, their ally, was a foreigner. But here, as in other cases, the thing is assumed which requires to be proved. Ben-Tabeal's parents and country are utterly unknown. To argue for or against a theory on the ground of his lineage being this or that, is not only a groping in darkness, but is an insult to a reader's common sense.

<sup>1</sup> Brugsch, i. 295 (1600 B.C.). Egypt was the most convenient horse market for Israel in the wilderness; it is expressly said to have been one of several markets in Solomon's reign (2 Chron. ix. 28. See also 2 Kings xviii. 23; Hos. xiv. 3).

<sup>2</sup> *Records of the Past*, III. 99.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### BEGINNING OF SOLOMON'S FAME.

(1 Kings ii. 12-iii. 28 ; 2 Chron. i. 1-13.)

THE reign of Solomon in the book of Kings contains so many marks of a hand contemporary, or almost contemporary, with the events recorded, that it has generally been received, even by the most sceptical, as a trustworthy piece of history. Whoever compiled the book of Kings seems to have used fuller writings, from which he made larger or shorter extracts, according to his own judgment of what was best. We have no reason for thinking that he presents the history in his own words, as a modern writer would do. He makes extracts from the books which it was in his power to consult, and uses the very words of the books. A verse or two, seldom more, serve to connect one extract with another, by phrases constantly repeated, or slightly varied to suit the case. One of these constant phrases, occurring thirty-three times altogether, is, 'the rest of the acts of Solomon or Josiah' are written by some one or in some manuscript mentioned. Now, 'the rest of the acts of' is a form of speech in the Hebrew, which points to the mode of writing a historical book by extracting several pieces from an older writing, and leaving 'the rest' untold. On this plan the compiler seems to have handled 'the book of the acts of Solomon,' from which the account of his reign in 1 Kings i.-xi. is taken. Recently, however, the theory has been started, that the compiler used his discretion in attributing to Solomon and his people words and usages which were quite foreign to their thoughts, and were the growth of a later age. If this can be proved, all confidence

in the history is gone. But the growth of the idea shows at once the danger it is sure to lead to, and the attraction it exercises over men's minds. Thus Graf assigned the fouling of less than a fifth part of this stream of history to later writers (1866); while, thirteen years after (1879), Bishop Colenso pronounced nearly one-half of it hopelessly muddled. Estimates which differ so widely from each other, and which rest on the alleged dishonesty of writers, who have for ages occupied the highest place for truth, cannot be received as of any value. 'The book of the acts of Solomon' is not quoted by the writer of Chronicles. With a minuteness of detail which shows he had the writings before him, he quotes 'the words of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer,' for the doings, 'the first and the last,' of Solomon (2 Chron. ix. 29). The three together may have formed 'the book' quoted in the Kings.

Immediately after David's death, the hopes of Adonijah's party seem to have revived. But there was no open attempt at treason. Adonijah was a weak man, who modelled his ways of speaking and acting on those of others, especially his brother Absalom. The latter began his rebellion with a festive gathering at Hebron; Adonijah followed his leading with a feast at the Fuller's Well. Eating and drinking formed the first step in the treason of both. The second step was more serious. Absalom claimed for himself the wives of the deposed king. Ten women had been left to keep the palace when David fled from Jerusalem. These Absalom took as his own wives. Adonijah, prompted by stupidity, or put up to it by rash counsellors, again imitates his unsuccessful brother. Nothing more thoroughly shows the incapacity of the prince and his friends than this copying of a vanquished rebel. The mine that was to be fired beneath Solomon's throne had a long train. Bathsheba herself was made a worker in bringing about the threatened ruin. One day she received a visit from Adonijah. She may not have been

alarmed at his coming, but her words indicate surprise: 'Is thy coming peace?' she asked. The conversation that followed reveals the unfitness of the prince for a matter so delicate as the unseating of a newly-crowned sovereign. He does not hide from the king's mother the soreness he felt in having been set aside. But he does more. With an unaccountable disregard of a settlement, which it was at his peril to disturb, he reproaches Bathsheba with the honour Solomon had gained, not by merit or by right, but only by means to be spoken lightly of. 'Mine was the crown, thou knowest; to me had All-Israel set their faces to reign; howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's, for it was his from Jehovah.' No other meaning could be put on these words than, 'Feeling myself to have been wronged, I am cherishing the hope of one day righting that wrong.' But Bathsheba had not quickness of wit to read his thoughts. He proceeded, 'Speak now to Solomon the king, for he will not say thee nay, that he give me Abishag the Shunamite to wife.' Bathsheba passed her word to plead his cause. Adonijah recognised Solomon's right to dispose of Abishag; for it was not an ordinary case of asking or of choosing a wife. But was the request a feeler thrown out to test the king's sagacity, and the strength he felt in his position? Or was it the prayer of a lover, smitten with the exceeding beauty of the damsel? There is not a word of love or of beauty in the request preferred to Bathsheba. There is a soreness of feeling at having lost a grander prize than the fairest maiden in Israel; but no one can gather from Adonijah's words that he cared for either her beauty or her youth. The prince was thinking of other things.

Compliance with the suit of Adonijah seemed to Bathsheba a matter of course. Hastening to secure for him a favour which, in her view, might help to smooth the unpleasantness existing between the two brothers, she entered the presence chamber. Solomon's regard for his mother was profound. He

rose from his throne, made an obeisance before her, and ordered a throne for her at his own right hand. Her 'small request' she immediately presents, prefacing it with, 'Say me not nay.' But Solomon did not consider it a small request. 'Why ask Abishag?' he said; 'ask for him the kingdom also, for he is mine elder brother, and for Abiathar, and for Joab.' The clue to secret treason, that Solomon was waiting for, he had evidently found at last. He had reached the first rocks in his course as head of the State; his enemies more than his friends were watching his first essay in government. But they had not long to wait. 'God do so to me and more also,' he appears to have said among his counsellors, 'if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life.' Benaiah and the royal guards were despatched to carry out the order for the prince's death. And thus the ostensible head of the conspiracy was removed. But the real chiefs of the party, Joab and Abiathar, could not be allowed to escape. They were both in Jerusalem waiting the result of their first move in this game of treason. A king's messenger summoned the priest to Solomon's presence. 'Worthy of death art thou,' the king said, 'but I will not at this time put thee to death. Get thee to Anathoth to thine own estate.' The ground on which the doom of death was remitted was honourable to the king. The priest, who had shared all David's wanderings and dangers, could not be slain as a traitor by David's son. He was finally thrust from the office of high priest; he was banished from court. The doom, long before uttered on Abiathar's family, was fulfilled by Abiathar's treason. So far as greatness was concerned, Abiathar was the last of his race. Joab was dealt with next. Rumour carried to him tidings of the discovery or betrayal of the plot. He might, and very likely he did imagine, that more was known than Solomon had ascertained. Conscience makes most traitors start at shadows, as it certainly made Joab. On great battle-fields, in hand-to-hand fights, his courage had been tried too often to

leave the faintest suspicion of cowardice against him. But conscience deprived Joab of manliness and sense when he heard the news of Adonijah's death. One false step made the bravest of Hebrew soldiers a coward. He had gone too often into battle and into intrigue with his life in his hand not to know what he was risking, when he began to play with treason. Should he fail in overthrowing Solomon, his own overthrow would be the forfeit. But as soon as he found his intrigues leading to this result, he fled to the altar of God for safety. The word used to express his haste is common in describing the flight of a broken army from a lost battle. And such was Joab's flight through the streets of Zion to the tent and altar. What availed to save Adonijah's life after the first plot, might save his after the second. It was a rough soldier's, not a wise statesman's idea; and a poor estimate had he formed of the vigour of the king. As soon as his flight was known to the palace, Solomon despatched Benaiah with the guards to take his life. 'In the king's name,' Benaiah said, 'come forth.' 'Nay,' Joab answered, 'for here will I die.' The captain was afraid to sacrifice a man to human law where the priests offered less noble victims in atonement to God. Blood was shed on that altar morning, noon, and night for the sins of men; a traitor and a murderer should not be allowed to escape by sheltering himself at the altar of purest justice. Benaiah was afraid, if not to take, at least to act on this view. A vague feeling of the wrongfulness of inflicting death in holy ground checked his hand, till he sent to the palace for further instructions. 'Do as he hath said, and fall upon him and bury him,' was the answer returned—an answer that passes as Solomon's, but an answer that was, perhaps, prompted by Nathan the prophet. Thus perished the slayer of two commanders more righteous than himself. While they relied on the sacredness of human customs as their safeguard, and were sadly deceived, he relied on the sacredness of God's altar, and may have been

even more sadly deceived than his victims. Joab's body was removed to his house in the wilderness, and buried there. It was reserved for what are called more enlightened times to dishonour the cold clay of a traitor, by exposing his remains for weeks and months to the gaze of the multitude; or rather to insult humanity itself by that warring with the dead, which kings and law courts long reckoned an enforcement of their decisions. The sentence passed on a famous servant of the English crown, Sir Walter Raleigh, by judges and nobles of England in 1603, is too shocking in its details even to be reproduced in print. And Pope Pius II., or *Æneas Sylvius*, by which name he is better known, after having seen the frightful revenge taken on the murderers of the Scottish king, James I., in 1437, calmly wrote of it in these terms: 'He could not tell whether he should give them greater commendations that revenged the king's death, or brand them with sharper condemnation that distained themselves with so heinous a parricide.'<sup>1</sup>

In reviewing these summary proceedings of Solomon and his advisers, we are struck with the slender grounds avowed for reopening the charge of treason against the prince and his followers. But it seems a fairer view to regard their fate, not as the result of reopening a case long closed, but as the penalty of a second conspiracy. A promise was made to Adonijah that, if he showed himself a good man, his treasonable feast at the Fuller's Well should never be brought up against him. But the request for Abishag was only a feeler put forth by the prince, at the bidding of more cunning intriguers, who believed Solomon either lacked the wisdom or was consciously too weak to refuse. It was the highest prudence on his part not to grant the request; but he might have been aware of the danger of yielding, and yet not have

<sup>1</sup> George Buchanan, writing in 1578, was of another mind: 'The murder was undoubtedly a cruel one, but it was assuredly revenged with a cruelty beyond the common bounds of humanity,' etc.

felt himself strong enough to resist. Either from suspicion or from secret information, the king and his advisers feared there was a danger beyond to this prayer of Adonijah. Other favours would be asked; soldiers and people would become accustomed to see the prince's claims allowed every time he put them forth, and Solomon's nominal rule would speedily pass away in some sudden act of bloodshed, such as Joab never feared to perpetrate.

The treatment of Shimei shows suspicion of his complicity in the intrigues of Adonijah. At the same time, the king and his advisers had no solid ground to build an accusation on. In marked contrast to the summary punishment of other intriguers stands Solomon's dealing with Shimei. So far from taking the vengeance on him that David bequeathed to his heir as a duty, he grants him fair conditions of peace. Forbearance towards Shimei clearly implies good ground for the king's dealings with Adonijah and Joab. However, Shimei was a dangerous man. His home was far removed from court, and treason might be hatched under his roof without a chance of discovery. He lived among his own tribesmen, in the midst of friends who had shown their regard for him at a time, when few would have stood side by side with a traitor. He was also too far off to be easily reached by the young king's arm. And as he was nearer to Abiathar's estate at Anathoth than to the king's palace, it was unsafe to allow materials so apt to catch fire to lie in the same neighbourhood. Precautions were accordingly taken to guard against danger from Shimei. He was told by Solomon to build a house for himself in Jerusalem. Imprisonment within the bounds of that city was the condition on which his life was spared. But this, though clearly understood, was awkwardly expressed: 'In the day thou crossest the brook Kedron know verily thou shalt surely die.' As Kedron runs at the bottom of the valley on the north and east sides of Jerusalem, Shimei was thus forbidden to visit Anathoth or



Benjamin. Was he also forbidden to leave the city on the south and the west? For three years he thought it unsafe. Lapse of time made him forgetful or bold. When twenty years younger, he had been guilty of incredible folly during David's flight from Zion. Longer experience of life had evidently made him no wiser. One day two of his slaves were missing. That they had fled from their master is no proof of cruelty on his part; but it leaves an unfavourable impression on our minds. Shimei soon learned that the fugitives were hiding in Gath, which seems to be the meaning of the words that they had fled to Achish-ben-Maachah, king of Gath, a tributary of the Hebrews. Too impulsive, or too angry, he immediately started on a journey to that city, claimed the fugitives from the king, and returned with them to Jerusalem. The Benjamite had many unfriends in Zion. The survivors of David's guards alone, mindful of the stone-throwing at Bahurim, and aware of his sentence, would be quick to catch him in the act of breaking his engagements with the king. They were as quick to inform their master. A royal messenger summoned the offender to the palace. His imprisonment within the bounds of the city, and the condition attached, were called to his remembrance; while Gath, the centre of Philistine intrigue, was probably a dangerous place for a suspected man to visit, even on the ground of recovering his servants. He had no plea to offer in bar of sentence; and Benaiah, now the king's right-hand man, received orders for his death.

The path of Solomon was thus cleared of dangerous enemies. Although a man of peace, he began his reign with shedding blood. But it was shed on the side of justice. Another danger also was engaging his thoughts. A change had come over the worship of the people. It appeared to the recorder of his reign as a blot on the national faith. 'Only,' he says, in abatement of the king's praise, 'the people sacrificed in high places; Solomon loved the Lord, . . . only he sacrificed

and burnt incense in high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place' (1 Kings iii. 2-4). This was a new phase of worship, as new as 'the great high place,' Gibeon. Although the historian of Solomon's reign is generally thought to have written the books of Samuel also, the ideas he presents of this new worship are unlike anything found in Samuel. Gibeon was a city of temple slaves, hitherto unknown in the history of Hebrew faith. Without warning it bursts upon us as 'the great high place.' Gibeon may have been so close to Nob that, though there was a change of name, there may really have been little or no change of place. And Nob itself (*high*) may be but another name for a spot that was long held sacred in Israel, and that suddenly sinks out of sight for centuries—the high place of Mizpeh (*watchtower*). The identity of all three, or of Nob with Mizpeh, has been strongly insisted on, though it is still only conjecture.<sup>1</sup> A reason is given by the Chronicler for this honour paid to Gibeon. The Mosaic tabernacle and brazen altar, after being removed from blood-stained Nob, were set up at Gibeon. Although the writer in Kings is silent on this point, he lets a reader see there was something singular about the place: 'A thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon *that altar*'—words that are stronger in the Hebrew than in the English, and that imply a peculiarity about the altar in keeping with the writer's way of only once mentioning other sacred things. But this reason for the greatness of Gibeon does not prove the greatness of the town. It is a testimony to the honour of the tabernacle which was set up there. Greatness went with it wherever it went. This is the same view of the tabernacle as is presented in the Pentateuch. It sanctified any spot, however humble. Unfortunately, however, the long-continued collapse of Levitical institutions had given rise to other departures from the law. The people—whether by their

<sup>1</sup> Captain Conder in *P. E. F. Quarterly Statement*, January 1875, p. 34.

own hands or through the agency of priests—were sacrificing on high places. Sacrificing meant slaying victims for a feast, or offering victims as atonement on an altar. While the former was allowed anywhere, the latter was restricted to the brazen altar of the wilderness. But the troubles of the century which preceded Solomon's accession may have done much to efface this distinction from popular practice, though it was clearly laid down in the law-book. For a hundred years there had been no central altar, and during the latter part of that time, customs had grown up at variance with the law-book. In all nations, indeed, the law has sometimes said one thing, and custom allowed another, till attention was strongly called to the difference between them. Samuel had passed away without leaving a message from God to guide the nation to a new Central Altar. Other prophets had followed him, few in number and of inferior standing. Nathan and Gad alone are mentioned. Even the schools of the prophets, which appear in Samuel's days, cease to be spoken of for generations after his death. History also reveals the fact that the law-books of the people were not so generally studied as they ought to have been. Things had come to this pass with Hebrew worship in Solomon's reign. New customs and new places were threatening to cause trouble.

The two high places preferred by Solomon in the beginning of his reign were Gibeon and Zion. One of them was the seat of the Mosaic brazen altar; the other of the ark. Accompanied by 'the chief of the fathers,' or his principal officers, he paid a visit to Gibeon. A thousand burnt-offerings were consumed on the altar there. Solomon was the offerer, for the victims came from his flocks; but he was neither the sacrificer nor the burner of incense. Priests placed the sacrifices on the altar, and burned incense at his request. A comparison of this story of sacrifice with that at the beginning of Jeroboam's reign, makes the difference between the two

clear. Solomon offered by means of priests in the appointed way, and was blameless: Jeroboam despised the appointed way, and took on himself the duty of sacrificing and burning incense (1 Kings xii. 33–xiii. 1). But a greater event than the sacrifice happened at Gibeon. In a dream that night, Solomon was asked by a Voice, ‘What shall I give thee?’ To the sleeper there was nothing astounding or overpowering in the heavenly presence, whatever shape it may have taken. A calm thoughtfulness, a feeling of the nearness of a friend, is seen in the king’s answer. He confesses weakness, perhaps inability, for the right discharge of duty. The terror which prompted others to dread instant death from God’s appearance, or to cast themselves on the ground in conscious unworthiness, has no place here. Even Abraham, the friend of God, never displayed confidence equal to this. ‘I am a little child,’ Solomon said; ‘a weighty burden has been laid on me as judge of this mighty people; give me wisdom.’ ‘Riches thou hast not asked,’ the Vision answered, ‘nor length of days, nor victory over thine enemies. Wisdom thou shalt have, such as none before thee had, and such as none after thee shall have. Wealth and glory above all kings shall be thine too, and length of days, if thou keep my laws.’ Solomon awoke from sleep with pleasant feelings. The dream was a reality. Only the faintest shadow of a threat specked the clearness of its promise and hope. When the same Voice spoke again, many years after, the threat, which was no bigger than a man’s hand at first, was covering the whole sky. Wisdom he did receive; riches also fell to his lot above all other kings; but a long life he did not enjoy, for he broke the condition, ‘if thou keep my law.’ Apparently, the Vision awoke fears of error in his choice of Gibeon for so magnificent a sacrifice. He returned to Jerusalem; and before the ark of the covenant he ‘offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.’

As wisdom, especially in judgment, was the gift bestowed

on Solomon, an opportunity was soon presented of displaying it in public. Hitherto all his management of state affairs had been so private, that it was hard to separate his actings from those of his advisers. A king, whose throne had been threatened and whose right to rule did not rest on birth or the people's choice, required to show ability surpassing that of other men. Saul had done so when he rescued Israel from Ammon; David had done the same when he vanquished the giant; but Solomon was a man of peace, whose triumphs were to be sought elsewhere. Both Saul and David seem to have gained the esteem of men by the beauty of their looks, before they won it by valorous deeds. Solomon, the son of a most beautiful mother, was equally happy, if the portrait of him drawn in the Song of Songs be a sketch from the life (v. 10-16): 'Dazzlingly white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; his head is precious fine gold; his locks are curly, and black as the raven; his eyes (moving quickly) like doves by the rivers of waters; bathed in milk, fitly set; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh; his hands, rounds of gold set with stones of Tarshish (the topaz); his body, an ivory work of art overlaid with sapphires; his legs, pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance, as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; yea, he is altogether lovely.' Seldom has a poet drawn so brilliant a picture of physical beauty. But grace of person was enhanced by graces of the mind. Unexpectedly, one day, a chance of distinction turned up, when he had taken his seat in public to award justice. Two women appeared before the king. Each of them had an infant in her arms; and both were harlots, a class of women then becoming unhappily numerous in the wealthy capital of the Hebrew empire. Each had given birth to a son within two days. They lived together, but there was no one in the house save the women and the infants. One of the women overlaid her son in her first sleep. Discovering the death at midnight, she stealthily took the child from her

companion's side while she slept, and put the younger infant in its place. When day broke, the injured mother found a dead child in her bosom. Examining it, she became convinced it was the other woman's son, not hers. The mother who stole the living child denied this story entirely. Wrangling could not settle the matter: they came to the king for judgment.

Solomon's guards are standing round. Crowds of citizens, as usual, are looking on. The court is in the open air; the time is early morning; the place is perhaps the city gate, the ordinary resort of all who wished gossip, or scandal, or news. Suddenly a knotty point is brought forward for solution. It was one of those cases which would rivet the attention of a crowd on the action of the judge. No witnesses can be called; no marks can be referred to in proof of either woman's averment. The judge's sagacity is the only resource to trust to for discovering a touchstone of truth; and that judge is an untried youth. Neither women nor bystanders were kept long in doubt; the inspiration of genius does not wait the slow march of reason. The judge stated the case, that there might be no mistake about the point in dispute. He also made clear the hopelessness of coming to a decision. His words were few and distinct. Every onlooker apprehended from them the difficulty of judging. 'Bring a sword for me,' the king then cried, addressing an officer of the guards. The sword was brought and laid before the king. The child in dispute was also taken by a soldier. 'Divide the living child in two,' was the king's next order to his guards. 'Give half to the one woman, and half to the other.' The sword was raised by one soldier, the child was held by others. A decision so cruel would horrify the onlookers. Was this man of peace to turn out a man of blood in early youth? But the glittering sword pierced the real mother's heart before it reached her offspring. 'For my sake, my lord, give her the living child,' she cried in horror. 'Kill him not.' 'Neither mine nor thine let it be,' exclaimed the thief of the infant;

‘cut.’ ‘Hold,’ the king said, for the touchstone of a mother’s tenderness had revealed the truth. ‘Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. She is the mother.’ The story of this trial spread throughout the nation; the people felt that a wise and understanding king was seated on the throne.

After Solomon began to build the temple, he ‘made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh’s daughter, and brought her into the city of David until he had made an end of building his own house’ (1 Kings iii. 1). She was neither his first nor his favourite wife. But the marriage was attended by events, which are briefly mentioned in the history, and on which recent discoveries are shedding light. At that time, Gezer, a town on or near the high road from Egypt to Assyria, revolted from Solomon. Situated on an outlying hill (756 feet above the sea) at the mouth of the pass of Beth-horon, where the rolling plain and the highlands meet,—cut off or isolated, as its name imports,—it was well adapted for defence. A copious spring of water bursts forth at the hill-foot; assistance in men could be hoped for from the Philistines in the neighbourhood. The town was seized by descendants of the ancient heathen, who probably preferred to die with arms in their hands, rather than submit to a lingering death as slaves in the Lebanon woods or the quarries for Moriah. Solomon’s generals did not or could not reduce the fortress. Pharaoh undertook and finished the work. He probably found the fortress blocking his road to Jerusalem. Evidently he did not come to Solomon’s country merely for the festivities connected with his daughter’s marriage. Nor did he trust his officers with conducting her in safety across the desert to her new home. He came to Palestine himself with the men and appointments required for the siege of a fortress. But this sovereign seems to have been the great King of Assyria as well as the Pharaoh of Egypt. A double title of this kind occurs elsewhere in Hebrew literature. Cyrus, though he is generally called King of Persia, figures once as

King of Babylon, the city and empire which he conquered (Ezra v. 13). Profane history sanctions his double title, for on one brick, preserved in the British Museum, he bears the title King of Babylon, which was long regarded as a suspicious reading in the Hebrew of Ezra. In Solomon's day the Pharaoh of Egypt may also have been Emperor of Assyria. A revolution had taken place in the Nile Valley, which compelled the reigning family to seek refuge in the great Oasis. That family was connected by marriage with Assyria. In course of years their wrongs were avenged by the Mesopotamian king, who invaded Egypt, nominally for the purpose of restoring the exiled family to their rightful place, but really with the view of subjugating the country. A change in the government of Egypt was the result. Two or three satraps, owing for overlord the great Emperor of Assyria, ruled the land. Solomon also had begun to reign about that time. If, then, the great King, returning home to Nineveh from Egypt, passed through Palestine with his army, the siege of Gezer is invested with a meaning hitherto unknown. Pharaoh's daughter also becomes a doubtful phrase. It may mean the daughter of the Assyrian king, now also Pharaoh of Egypt, or one of the princesses related to him and born of Chaldean blood. In marrying her, Solomon may have done nothing more than Isaac and Jacob did. He sought a wife from the original stock of his race. But the languages, thus introduced into Solomon's palace by the queen and her women, imply an acquaintance on his part with foreign tongues, of which he is too hastily assumed to have been ignorant. Nor was she the only one of his princesses who spoke another language than Hebrew. All the dialects of Palestine and Northern Syria were in course of years represented in his house. But the languages of the palace were also those of the empire. Hence there must have been an acquaintance with foreign tongues at Jerusalem, to which we do not attach weight till we begin to think of its value in literature. The Syrian dialect was



spoken at court in Hezekiah's reign, two centuries later. The same tongue and others also would be as well known at the court of Solomon.

The visit of Pharaoh to Jerusalem—for though not expressly stated, it is clearly implied—imparts meaning to the text, 'Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East, and all the wisdom of Egypt; for he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about.' Pharaoh came to Palestine with an army. But wise counsellors were with him as well as brave captains. The former were more to Solomon's liking than the latter. Their philosophy pleased him better than the science of war. Perhaps there were among them wise men from the East, as well as wise men from Egypt. Ethan and others, whose names are given as tests of the king's greatness in wisdom, were famous members of the tribe of Judah in ancient times (1 Chron. ii. 6). Two of them, indeed, appear as psalm writers (Ps. lxxxviii., lxxxix.). But evidently a large acquaintance with the languages and literature of neighbouring nations must be ascribed to Solomon.

The book of Proverbs reveals a state of society in the cities of Solomon's empire not unlike what prevails among ourselves. The same passions are seen at work; the same desires; the same strength, and the same feebleness of virtue. A greed of gain, which brought about its owner's ruin and death, meets a reader at the beginning of the book, and darkens many a saying to the end. Men, hasting to be rich, sought for buried treasure with the consuming eagerness which a lottery is known to cause at the present day. The search for wisdom was neglected for the finding or the making of money. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way. In spite of the curses of a starving people, dealers withheld their corn from sale till enormous gains rewarded them, contrary to the spirit of Hebrew law. Unjust trading in other forms contrived to

acquire great revenues, while righteous dealing secured only what is called 'a better little.' False balances and unjust weights were common, the hope of gain outweighing the loss sure to follow on detection. The pursuit of wealth was thus the fruitful mother of selfishness and wrong-doing in every form. Men broke their words or faithlessly repudiated their engagements. But the extensive commerce of Solomon's reign also presented chances of honourably realizing great riches, which were unknown to the simpler tastes of a former generation. Nor were these chances lightly esteemed by the public sentiment. 'In all labour there is profit,' says the writer, correctly laying down the first principle of our political economy; 'but the talk of the lips tendeth to penury.' A mere talker was contemptible in his sight. A true worker was one who profited by honest labour, and of whom the farther saying held good, 'The crown of the wise is their riches.'

Wealth, unjustly got, brought many evils in its train. Justice was not always administered with purity: 'A mean man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.' Princes and judges gave way also to wine and strong drink. Drunkenness had become common. A staggering winebibber was not an unusual sight in the streets. He is compared to the voyager on a stormy sea, who chooses for his bed the unsteady top of a mast in a swaying, pitching ship. And never was a more graphic description written of the helpless drunkard, muttering incoherent thoughts to himself, than 'Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath quarrels? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine' (xxiii. 29). Fools attained to high positions, which would have been beyond their hopes, had not money formed a ladder up which they could climb. A fool without wealth is a fool, and nothing more. A rich fool may be laughed at, or used to point the moral of a sharp saying.

Sometimes he becomes a danger to society as well as to himself. Solomon may have seen or heard of these and similar results of money-making, without being able to apply a remedy. But there were other results. Indecent women seem to have abounded in the cities of Palestine. They are not said to have been of Hebrew birth. As a vast body of heathen labourers were pressed into the king's service, and transported from home to the Lebanon woods, many women must have been left destitute and friendless. The indecency, which was the curse of Solomon's large cities, may have largely arisen from this forcible shifting of the population. Honest women, again, were the fairest ornament and the strongest bulwark of the land. Nothing is more striking in the book of Proverbs than the contrast drawn between the two classes. Shame and ruin attend the one; wealth and honour follow the other. Deceit and treachery were waiting at street corners to snare unwary youth. Honourable marriage, and vows honourably kept, enabled thrifty women to place their husbands among the rulers of the land, to clothe all their household in scarlet, and to fill their houses with every good thing. A virtuous wife is compared to 'the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from far.' What men and women are to-day in the various duties and labours of life, they were also in the age of Solomon. Nothing is changed; but experience has added many an example to confirm the grand aim of his proverbial philosophy, The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TEMPLE AND PALACE OF SOLOMON.

(1 Kings v. 1-viii. 66, ix. 15-25 ; 2 Chron. ii. 1-vii. 11, viii. 1-10.)

THE threshing-floor of Araunah was too small for the site of a great temple. More room was obtained by a device then generally practised among Hebrew farmers and vine-growers. Wherever a hill face seemed suitable for the growth of vine, or olive, or corn, a retaining wall, brought up from a lower level, and filled in behind with stones and soil, gave them a terrace more easily worked and of a better nature than a rocky slope. Sometimes a stream of water, led along the upper edge of the terrace, greatly increased its value to the husbandman. By adopting this device, the area required for the temple buildings on Moriah was obtained, though at vast cost and labour. The retaining walls were in some places more than one hundred and fifty feet high. And if hollows existed anywhere in the hill face, on the site selected for the main building, the foundations of masonry might be laid far below the floor or platform from which the temple ultimately seemed to rise. These retaining walls are now spoken of as the rampart walls; the whole area gained by the device is called the enclosure. But while there was thus a large filling up behind the rampart walls, in some parts there was a cutting down of the rock to allow easy access to the enclosure from the deep valley on the west, or to let the part of it chosen for the building stand higher than the courts. This loftier part was the platform, to which access was probably gained by flights of steps. On the stone pavement or platform the temple rose, a conspicuous building of dazzling

white stone, built in magnificent courses, with the centre of each stone in high relief and the joints considerably sunk. Underneath the enclosure and platform was an amount of arching, buttressing, building, and filling up, of which we can form no adequate idea. Solomon had more reason to boast of the foundations of this temple than any king of Egypt or Babylonia of his 'embankments,' and 'mountains,' and 'platforms.' If the magnificent masonry, which has been laid bare eighty feet below the present surface of the ground, be the work of Solomon's builders, he has left a proof of his greatness in a wall, to which there cannot be found a 'parallel in any subsequent building in any part of the world.' The courses of masonry vary in height from 3 feet 3 in. to 6 feet, and one stone at the south-west angle is 38 feet 9 inches long. What was thus done on a large scale in the case of Moriah seems to have been done on a small scale by Herod, when he raised the rampart walls of the fortress or mosque which covers the site of Abraham's burial-place, the cave of Machpelah. In the rampart walls of the latter we may study those of the former.

'In the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, Solomon began to build the house of the Lord,' was the inscription, which any other builder but a Hebrew king would have carved on the temple. A place so holy allowed no praise of man to be written on its walls, and no carvings of priests, or symbols, or ceremonies, such as the temple faces of other nations show to illustrate their faith, even when their books are silent. Books have preserved the inscription for Solomon's temple. But instead of being thankful for the record, many writers delight in showing its falsehood, or in imagining the process by which it was manufactured. While we ought to recognise and give due weight to the difficulties connected with the inscription, we

ought also to acknowledge its singular agreement with the ways of other temple restorers and temple builders in the East. One example is found in Jerusalem itself. Eight centuries after Solomon, when the temple on Moriah was restored, and the freedom of the people secured by the Maccabees, the same respect was shown for the walls of the holy house. As a memorial of the worth and services of Simon, the great high priest of that family, the people wrote their thanks 'on tables of brass, which they set upon pillars in Mount Zion,' or, since Zion was a word of elastic meaning, 'they commanded the tables of brass to be set up within the compass of the sanctuary, in a conspicuous place' (1 Macc. xiv. 27, 48). A second, and in many respects a singular, example is furnished by the annals of Assyria. 'After 418 years,' says Sennacherib, 'the gods Rimmon and Sala from Babylon I caused to come forth, and to the temples I restored them.'<sup>1</sup> This interval is justly regarded as of the highest value in chronology. And Tiglath Pileser writes, 'The temple of Anu and Vul, having lasted for 641 years, fell into ruins. For 60 years the foundations of it were not laid.'<sup>2</sup> The value of these dates is great. An attempt has been made by Wellhausen and his school to invalidate the 480 years of Solomon, because the number can be divided into three periods of 160 years each. They should apply the same rule of doubt to Tiglath Pileser's 641, for it is obviously divisible into four periods of the same length, or 160 years! To quote illustrations of the dating by day and month, and the king's regnal year, as in Solomon's case, is unnecessary; they are found throughout the monuments of Egypt and Mesopotamia. But the employment of slaves in Lebanon, the cutting of cedar beams there for temple and palace, with the conveyance of squared stones to Nineveh, are not uncommon in the history of Assyria. 'I assembled 22 kings,' says Esarhaddon; 'great beams and rafters of cedar and

<sup>1</sup> *Records of the Past*, ix. 27.<sup>2</sup> *Records*, v. 23.

cypress from the mountains of Sirar and Lebanon, slabs of granite, and alabaster, and various other stones from the mountain quarries, with labour and difficulty, unto Nineveh they brought along with them.' Manasseh, of Judah, was one of these kings. But perhaps the most curious illustration of the example set by Solomon is Sargon's description of the temple palace which he built at Khorsabad. Among other things he says, 'I made a spiral staircase similar to the one in the great temple of Syria, that is called in the Phœnician language *Bethilanni*.' By Syria he means the region of which Ashdod was a city. This brings a reader's thoughts near to Jerusalem. But the Phœnician and the Hebrew were the same tongue. And Bethilanni has in it a clear ring of Bethel, House of God. However, it is more agreeable to the speech of both nations to regard the word as standing for *Beth-el-clyon, House of God Most High*—a name which Hebrews would use in speaking to foreigners of the temple of Jehovah (Hebrew of 1 Kings ix. 8).

The preparations made by David for this great building are given in the books of Chronicles. Little is said on the subject by the earlier writer in the first book of Kings. But he gives in fuller detail the outlay of costly material on the building; while the Chronicler, writing more than one hundred years after, presents us in bulk with the vast weight of gold, silver, brass, and iron gathered for the work. There is a meaning in this twofold handling of the subject. The writer of the Chronicles never looked on the temple built by Solomon. Details of its glory would thus strike his readers' fancy less strongly than a recital of the vast wealth laid out on its adornment. Six hundred talents of gold were spent, he says, in gilding one room of the temple; and the weight of gold nails used was fifty shekels.<sup>1</sup> But the first writer of Solomon's reign in the book of Kings indulges in details, which it is not easy in our days to understand. He was writing from

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. iii. 8, 9. See 1 Kings vi. 20-22.

sight, not from memory or from books. If a reader failed to understand his words, he could discover the truth by a visit to the building itself. As 'the pattern' was delivered 'in writing' to Solomon by his father, we probably have, in the book of Kings, part of the specifications which David and the architects he employed drew up for the work. Page after page has all the look of an architect's paper of instructions, not of a historian's description. Builders, carvers, designers, could easily work out these details from the specifications, provided the head that devised them overlooked the building. It is the want of this oversight which renders hopeless all attempts at complete restoration, on paper, of Solomon's temple.

Solomon felt himself unequal to the work he had in view without help from abroad. Precisely as Egypt furnished the teaching required to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, so Tyre was destined to furnish the designer who should put into shape and carry fully out the great plans of David and Solomon. Already had the craftsmen of that city built a house of cedar for David. And when Solomon, aware of the greatness of his undertaking, would not trust it to 'his own cunning men and the cunning men of David his father,' he sent for help to his friend and ally, Hiram, king of Tyre. There was then residing in that city a famous worker in brass, named apparently after the king. He was the son of a Tyrian father, who had followed the same craft, and of a Hebrew woman 'of the daughters of Dan.' His mother was then a widow. Recommended by Hiram the king, and invited by Solomon, Hiram the worker repaired to the Hebrew court, and was naturally regarded as a member of the tribe of Naphtali, to which the outlying district of Dan, called Dan-Laish, probably belonged. In the Tyrian king's letter he was extolled as 'skilful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving,



and to find out every device which shall be put to him.' But the historian in the Kings only describes fully the marvellous designs in bright brass, which he executed at a foundry on some clay ground at Zaretan, near the Jordan. From the letter of the Tyrian king, preserved in the book of Chronicles, it appears, however, that Hiram was a designer generally, and a builder or engineer also. Some of the magnificent masonry, recently laid bare, and marked with what seem to be masons' signs, may have been his work—not merely 'great stones of ten cubits and eight cubits' (1 Kings vii. 10), but stones often twice or thrice as large. He was not the only Tyrian craftsman sent to help the Hebrew king. Other men of ability were employed for various purposes. The cisterns and tunnels for bringing in and carrying away water within the temple enclosure may have been largely their work. However, the existence of cisterns for storing water or grain, cut out of the live rock and found in every part of Palestine, forbids us to attribute all the engineering triumphs of the temple to foreign skill. Many Tyrian craftsmen were also engaged in the Lebanon woods to prepare cedar for transport to Tyre, while Hiram the king arranged to send on the logs in great floats to Joppa by sea. According to the letters which passed between the two kings, the price for these services was paid partly to the Tyrian prince and partly to his people. Every year about twenty thousand quarters of wheat, with twelve hundred gallons of purest olive oil, prepared after the manner of the tabernacle,<sup>1</sup> were sent to Hiram's court for household use (1 Kings v. 11). To the men themselves the same quantity of wheat, as much more of barley, with one hundred and twenty thousand gallons of wine and oil, formed apparently the yearly payment (2 Chron. ii. 10). Fortunately a standard of comparison exists by which we

<sup>1</sup> The word is *pounded*, as if the olives were beaten in a mortar. The only other passages in which it occurs are Ex. xxvii. 20, xxix. 40; Lev. xxiv. 2; Num. xxviii. 5.

may estimate the value of this price for work rendered. At Solomon's court the household provision for a day included 'thirty measures of fine flour and threescore measures of meal.' Reckoning this fine flour and meal as wheat, we have ninety quarters for daily use, or upwards of thirty-two thousand in a year. Solomon thus paid Hiram with about one half the quantity of wheat consumed at his own court. For the Tyrian workers the payment was a little more than Solomon's court expenditure of corn every day, if the book of Chronicles has preserved the yearly outlay and not the total remuneration. By calculating roughly the value of the craftsmen's corn, wine, and oil, in English money, we find that the Hebrew king paid them yearly about £90,000. And allowing an average of £300 for each overseer, we may see that there may have been about three hundred of them altogether. Gold and silver were of less value in Tyre than corn as payment for work done. What the former are in our day, the latter was in Solomon's. But calculations of this kind are not merely curious. They shed light on the history; they bring it home to our own hearths; they give it life and movement; and, by strongly contrasting one set of numbers with another, they establish truth or they disclose falsehood.

The weight of gold laid up, chiefly during David's prosperous reign, or got from the great men of the court, was about five hundred tons, of silver more than a thousand tons, of brass about eleven hundred, and of iron six thousand tons. In one passage these vast weights are justly spoken of as hundreds or thousands of thousands,—that is to say, in common speech, countless. To turn the gold and silver into English money is about as wise as to reckon the iron at its cost in our country and in our time. Neither was gold so dear in Palestine, nor iron so cheap as in Britain. The gold and silver were never meant to be coined into money. And vast as were these weights according to the Chronicles, the

outlay was as unstinted according to the Kings. A passing remark by the writer of the former book shows that the thickness of gold-plate which covered the walls, the ceiling, and the floor of the Holy of Holies, was about an eighth of an inch. The metal was not beaten out into leaf for gilding: it was laid on as solid plates and fastened with golden nails. A weight of six hundred talents was the outlay for this inner room, or about thirty tons. The ten candlesticks made by Solomon weighed more than half a ton of gold. Gold was also required for basons, spoons, snuffers, and plates for covering the ten tables, as well as the altar of incense. But all the plating in other parts of the temple was not of pure gold. Apparently silver was used as an alloy or an offset—‘apples of gold in pictures of silver,’ or ‘borders of gold with studs of silver’—in the less sacred parts of the building, and in the vessels which were not devoted to the holiest purposes. In a temple built by Nebuchadnezzar four centuries afterwards, some of the rooms were coated with silver, some with copper, and others with gold. Solomon used silver for the same purpose, especially in decorating the rooms built against the temple walls, for nearly a half of the weight of silver was applied ‘to overlay the walls of the houses’ (1 Chron. xxix. 4). More details have been given regarding the copper. The brazen pillars in front of the temple entrance were hollow tubes, a handbreadth thick, and each contained upwards of fifty tons of metal. The brazen sea was a hemispherical bowl, of which the breadth was above thirteen feet, and the depth nearly seven. Whoever drew up the original account from which the dimensions are taken, was acquainted with the relation which the diameter of a circle bears to its circumference. Probably he could also calculate the weight of brass required for the casting. Eighty or one hundred tons, if not more, would be used for the brazen sea alone. However uncertain these calculations may be from our ignorance on various points, yet, on a rough estimate, the brazen sea, the

oxen on whose backs it rested,<sup>1</sup> and the two pillars of the temple porch, must have required not less than one-fifth of all the brass collected for the temple. Little is said about the purposes to which the great weight of iron was applied; the sawing of the hewn stones with saws for the rampart walls was probably one of them. But the enormous number of wood-cutters, stone-hewers, quarry-men, and road-makers, mentioned in the history, would not have had eighty pounds weight of iron a-piece had the whole mass been divided among them. And if we spread this over a period of seven years, during which the work was in progress, we shall find the outlay scanty enough.<sup>2</sup>

Of the skill required in devising and finishing the great castings for the temple no one can speak too highly. They stand favourable comparison with the work of modern days. The largest bell at present in use in the world weighs more than did the brazen sea, but others not one-third or one-fifth of its size are also of world-wide fame. It cannot, therefore, be thought that brass vessels, great and small, such as those made by Hiran for Solomon, were unworthy of the reputation for grandeur and wisdom enjoyed by that king. Each of them also appears to have been cast as one piece, not put together from separate fragments. At least the Chaldeans found it necessary to break the largest of them in pieces before transporting them to Babylon (Jer. lii. 17). Other conquerors, who had mastered Jerusalem and spoiled it of much treasure, despaired of carrying away the pillars and the sea, except by a wanton destruction of beauties which they could not fail to admire. Ahaz, a degenerate successor of Solomon, took the sea from the backs of the supporting oxen,

<sup>1</sup> Sargon, one of the greatest of the Assyrian kings, placed eight double lions of copper between the doors of a temple palace. They weighed above thirty tons. — *Records*, ix. 19.

<sup>2</sup> The use of iron for tools at this early period may be surprising, but is not to be discarded as unlikely. The 'long iron nail' found at the south-east angle of the great wall may not be without value in this respect.

put it on a stone platform, and gave the oxen with other castings of brass to the king of Assyria. The oxen, the lavers, and the decorated borders of the temple barrows, disappear in his reign. To the splendid inventive power, seen in these great castings, has to be added the skill displayed in conveying them from the foundry in the Jordan valley, where they were cast, to the top of a mountain more than three thousand feet higher. There was no river, like the Nile, down which they could be floated easily and safely to within a mile or two of their resting-place, and no canals by which they might be brought still nearer. Roads there were none, save the narrow tracks used by foot-passengers or beasts of burden.<sup>1</sup> And between the foundry and the temple hill there were many pieces of difficult ground, which would tax the highest skill of a modern engineer. But the work was done. These heavy castings were taken to the mountain-top, secured in their places, used by priests, and admired by conquerors for nearly four centuries, till they were wantonly broken by a barbarian rage, which coveted the materials while it despised the beautiful work of departed genius.<sup>2</sup> Solomon's reign, combining material progress so unusual with a body of laws and a code of morality so excellent as those of the Mosaic legislation, was distinguished by a height of civilization reached by no other country in the ancient world, and by few nations in modern

<sup>1</sup> Even at the present day 'Jerusalem is emphatically a mountain city . . . only approached by wild mountain roads,' *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 6. 'Great Paul,' the largest bell in Britain, is  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad by 9 feet high, and weighs above  $16\frac{1}{2}$  tons. Moscow contains two bells of vast size. One of them is said to weigh 80 tons, and, though it is chimed, no attempt is made to ring it. The other, called the 'Monarch,' dates from 1734. It is 21 feet in diameter, the same in height, and weighs 193 tons. The journey of 'Great Paul' to London in the middle of May 1882, its sinking on a wretched road, and the danger to bridges it went across, are detailed in the newspapers.

<sup>2</sup> This breaking up of brass or bronze vases has preserved to our day an inscription which, from its characters, is thought to be as old as the time of Solomon. Apparently it was a vase belonging to a temple on Lebanon, which had been carried off by plunderers to Cyprus. It contains the name of 'Hiram, king of the Zidonians,' and the chisel of the destroyer went through the middle of the *m* in the king's name.—*Athenæum*, 17th April 1880.

times. The development so happily begun was checked by a debasing idolatry, to which the king lent his countenance. And with that idolatry came a disregard of the rights of the people, and of the laws on which his throne rested. Tyranny and idolatry destroyed the civilization which it seemed to be Solomon's destiny to found in Israel.

The number of labourers employed in these works was very great. Men were drafted for the purpose from different classes of the people. First a 'levy' or 'tribute' is mentioned, raised out of All-Israel. It consisted of 30,000 men, divided into three courses of 10,000 a-piece. During one month they worked in the Lebanon woods; for two months they were at home. Who these men were is easily ascertained. They were not Hebrews, for Solomon made his own people overseers, not slave-workers. Nor were they of heathen blood, the children of the races whom Joshua at first and David in the end reduced to bondage, for the number of them is set down at 150,000 (1 Kings v. 15). As the levy was neither of Hebrews nor of heathen, it can only have been of domestic slaves. If a tithe of them were claimed for the king's work, this would imply a body of 300,000 men slaves in the whole kingdom, or about one-fifth of the soldiers who were enrolled on the army lists. Compared with the number of slaves in Greece and Rome, it is surprisingly small. But the burden of the levy would fall severely on the wealthy and the noble. Continued from year to year, it would stir up evil passions, from which rebellious thoughts would spring. If, then, the whole body of slaves in the land was so small, the work on most of the farms in Israel must have been done by the men and women of the household themselves. The Hebrews, as Goethe says of the Netherlanders, were 'a hardy and a self-reliant race, every one of them a little king, industrious, able, steadfast to truth and old customs.'

The other workers in Solomon's service were 150,000 strangers, or men of heathen birth, relics of the ancient owners

of the land. They were divided into two bodies,—one of 70,000 for transport; the other, of 80,000, for wood-cutting and stone-hewing. By a not uncommon irony of fate, the mother of the man who thus reduced these heathen tribes to slavery, had been in her youth the wife of a soldier belonging to one of them—Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Over the working gangs of 50 and 500, into which they were arranged, were set officers chosen from Solomon's own people.<sup>1</sup> For the 80,000 cutters, a great weight of iron would be required. Bronze weapons were commonly used in those times, but most of the brass provided for the temple seems to have been devoted to the lavers, the oxen, the sea, and the pillars, and other ornamental work. Iron tools would therefore be furnished to the workers from the six thousand tons used in the building (2 Kings vi. 1-6). A hatchet of ordinary size for each of them would absorb not less than 140 tons, allowing nothing for waste in casting, for losses in the work, and for theft. The great foundry near Zaretan, in the Jordan Valley, required an army of workers and an armoury of tools of which we cannot so much as form a conjecture. And equally unknown are the numbers of road-makers, quarrymen, hewers, and builders, the nature of the lifts used, the outlay on hammers and spades, saws and chisels.

Among the works undertaken for the temple were also the drains and water supply, matters of the highest importance in the elaborate ceremonial of the worship. The depths of Mount Moriah were pierced by Solomon's men, sometimes by shafts driven straight down or steeply sloping into the bowels of the mountain, sometimes by tunnels running from north to south not much above the level of the brook Kedron. One

<sup>1</sup> There were 3000 overseers, having 50 men each under them; and 300 having command of 500; altogether, 3300. But directing the whole were Tyrian craftsmen, who may have numbered 300 more, thus making up the number of overseers to 3600, unless 3600 be a corrupt reading in 2 Chron. ii. 18. Perhaps the odd 300 superintended the levy of 10,000 under Adoram.

of these tunnels, leading from the Virgin's Fount to the Pool of Siloam, is 1708 feet long, and presents at its southern end an inscription in old Hebrew which is thought to be of the age of Solomon. The value of these shafts, and tunnels, and tanks was very great. By one set the blood of sacrifices, the refuse, and the filth could be at once hurried out of sight into the heart of the rock, whence drains conveyed the whole to the Kedron and the Dead Sea. By another a copious supply of water could be brought from a distance. So honey-combed is the mountain with cisterns, that one of them, known as the Great Sea, would contain two million gallons, while the total storage provided probably exceeded five times that quantity.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the pools of Solomon, six miles off on the hill-sides above Bethlehem, as the three great tanks in Wadi Urtas are called, were built by the king's orders for supplying the temple-hill.<sup>2</sup> Although history is silent on the point, there is not known to have been any other king who had either power or wisdom sufficient to build these vast tanks; to lay a double set of pipes as far as Jerusalem, at a high level and a low level; and to tunnel the rocks, as they are found to be, even for miles in length. Nor are these engineering works remarkable for their vastness only. They imply a knowledge of science in advance of anything with which that age is usually credited. The pipe that connects the Wady Urtas pools with Mount Moriah is tile or stone, jointed with strong cement or mortar. One of the aqueducts descends into the valley from the pools; and on approaching Jerusalem, it is twenty feet below the surface. Hence Solomon's engineers, if it was originally their work, knew that water, conveyed in closed pipes, rises to the level of its

<sup>1</sup> *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> The tanks were made by building dams of solid masonry across the valley at different levels. Their dimensions are—

Highest, 380 ft. in length;	230 ft. in breadth;	25 ft. in depth.
Middle, 423 ft.       ,,	160 to 250 ft.       ,,	39 ft.       ,,
Lowest, 582 ft.       ,,	148 to 207 ft.       ,,	50 ft.       ,,



source, and they knew also that the height of the Bethlehem tanks was sufficient to send the water as high as the temple platform on Moriah. Simple as our daily experience makes this and other scientific principles seem to us now, we must regard their application in those days as indicating an uncommon degree of enlightenment. Other things, which were once well known to intelligent men, have been buried for ages under a load of barbarism, till civilization in modern days once more recovered them for humanity.

Everything connected with the building of this great temple was thus on a scale of exceeding magnificence. With unstinting hand, labour was bestowed on the costliest stones, the rarest woods, the most curious designs, the most precious oils and spices, the boldest engineering. From far and near came tribute and trade profits to be lavished on the lordly building. Of one thing, however, not a word is said. Egypt and Babylon and Northern Syria had seen grand public buildings for religious or royal use before Solomon's reign. But the builders did not scruple to inscribe on them long stories of their costly outlay, their piety, and their hopes. Or they erected pillars, on which were engraved boastful accounts of their greatness in peace and in war. Even on the great mosque built on the temple hill, and on that at Hebron, which is supposed to cover the Cave of Machpelah, inscriptions are found in abundance. But nothing of this boastfulness was allowed in the temple of Jerusalem. There were carvings of animals and flowers on the wood; there was no writing on the great, smooth stones. The silence of the historian on this head is most expressive. What the kings of other lands did in writing their names and greatness on the temples which they built, Solomon seems never to have thought of. He and his people were a book-writing, not a stone-writing people. 'Memorial stones' appear at the beginning of Israel's history as a nation, engraven with the names of the tribes. They were precious stones, borne on

the high priest's breast and shoulders. 'Memorial books' also appear (Ex. xvii. 14). They were the records of the nation. But the great stones of the temple were not 'memorial stones,' destined to be written on. No sound of hammer or chisel was allowed to be heard on the stone work when the squared blocks were lifted into their place, and laid one on another. The vast weight not only dispensed with mortar, but probably drove the evened faces so close together as almost to conceal the joint. Every arrangement was thus designed to impress people and workers with a feeling of peculiar sacredness, attaching to the new palace of Jehovah. And after ages carried this feeling of reverence farther than is warranted.

The main building of the temple itself was a one-storey house, about 90 feet in extreme length, 30 broad, and 45 in height,<sup>1</sup> or twice the dimensions of the tabernacle. It stood on the levelled hill-top of Moriah, but on what precise spot we need not now attempt to ascertain. Apparently the stones used were got from the quarries near or rather in the mountain itself. As it is expressly called a 'beautiful house' by those who were never within its doors, we may feel certain that the dazzling whiteness of the stone, which astonished visitors to the temple in our Lord's time, was one source of this feeling of admiration towards the temple of Solomon. Rising from a paved platform on the highest part of the hill-top, and built of white limestone, it presented a splendid appearance of vastness and solidity from every point, however distant, which commanded a view of Jerusalem. The temple was a fortified castle of immense strength, crowning a hill, which nature and art combined to make unusually bold of view and capable of defence. Its length lay east and west: the entrance door, shaded by a magnificent porch, faced the rising sun. Priests of high rank, called 'the Keepers of the Threshold,' of whom

<sup>1</sup> If the cubit be taken at 16 inches and not at 18 inches, the dimensions become 80 feet, 27 feet, and 40 feet.

three are specially referred to (Jer. lii. 24), had charge of this approach, that nothing might venture near which was forbidden by the law. These keepers were entirely distinct from the Levites of the gates. In a single line of his history, Tacitus, writing as if he were well acquainted with this distinction between threshold and gate, says: 'To the doors only was access permitted to the Jew; from the threshold all but priests were warned off.' Before the porch, thus jealously guarded, was an open space, 'between the porch and the altar,' apparently regarded as the most sacred part of the ground about the temple (Joel ii. 17). It terminated at the great altar of burnt-offering, or at the small brazen altar constructed in the wilderness, both of which stood near the middle of the inner court or court of the priests. That court was enclosed by a wall of three stone courses, perhaps rising to a height of 10 or 12 feet. Cedar beams served to carry the roof of a covering, which furnished shelter in inclement weather. Great doors sheathed or studded with brass gave entrance to this court. The enclosing wall interfered but little with the view of the loftily situated temple inside. Somewhat lower down the hill to the east, and beyond the outer court, was the great gate, which gave the chief access to the temple court from the Kedron side of Moriah. The rampart wall of the enclosure at that spot may have been more than 150 feet in height to one looking up from the banks of the brook. This gate was kept by the Levitical porters or the temple police. Right over against it, across the deep cleft, called the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and possibly regarded as part of the sacred precincts, was Mount Olivet, the public park of the city, whose spreading flanks, shaded by trees of many kinds, swept upwards to a summit 200 feet higher than the temple platform. From that top, Levites looking over the hills and houses of the city, could best discern the first faint crescent of the young moon as it became disengaged from the setting sun. Probably, therefore, in Solomon's time, it was the station

chosen for ascertaining the beginning of the Hebrew month in the way which that people is known to have observed. The cry of the discoverers of the crescent, ringing through the stillness of approaching evening, would warn priests and people in the court below to sound the sacred trumpets which announced the festival of New Moon. The position of the temple thus rendered the approach to it unlike the approaches to more ancient temples in Egypt. A street several hundred yards in length, and lined with giant shapes cut out of stone, led over a sandy plain to the portico of these temples. Some of the streets remain to this day, not in their original perfection, but with enough of grandeur remaining to fill a stranger with awe. Manifestly the Hebrew king did not borrow from an Egyptian model in building the temple on Moriah.

‘The great altar’ stood at a little distance east of the porch, either built of unhewn stones or a vast piece of live rock—the highest peak of Moriah—left untouched in levelling the hill. As the followers of Judas Maccabeus (165 B.C.) removed the stones of the altar, which had been polluted by the Syrian tyrant, and built a new altar of unhewn stone, it is doubtful whether we have good ground for considering the piece of live rock, which stands about five feet above the floor of the Mosque of Omar on the temple hill, as the altar of Solomon. Certainly it was part of the threshing-floor of Araunah. The two chambers, one over the other, which exist beneath it, may have been for the storage of grain, according to the custom of the country then, as it is now. The lower one was afterwards connected with the water system of the temple. It is  $12\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, with a manhole in the roof opening into the one above it, which, though beneath the floor of the mosque, is 8 feet high.<sup>1</sup> The building of a new altar by the Maccabees is opposed to the idea, that this piece of rock could have been ‘the great altar’ in the first temple any more than in the second; while the manifest connection of

<sup>1</sup> See Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, pp. 87, 97, 98. Tristram, *Israel*, p. 180.

its underground chambers with the water system of the temple renders it equally unlikely, that the rock could have been the floor on which the ark was placed in the Holy of Holies. On the south side of the building, and rising to a height of 13 feet, in the open court stood the great sea, filled with several thousand gallons of water for the priests in discharging the duties of their office. It rested on the haunches of twelve brazen oxen, facing outwards, and enclosed in a circle about 50 feet round. As their mouths evidently contained the pipes by which water was drawn off from the sea, their heads were six feet above the surface of the court, to enable the smaller lavers to get underneath. A supply of water must have been led from a great distance into this tank. Even in this small matter Solomon proceeds by fifth, not tenth parts. The sea took the place of the one laver, which stood between the tabernacle and the altar in the wilderness arrangements. As it was too large for convenient use, Solomon made ten great lavers, holding between them a fifth part of the water in the brazen sea, to form smaller baths for the priests to wash in (Ex. xl. 30-33). Five of them stood on the north side of the house, and five of them on the south side. As each laver held upwards of a ton weight of water, means had to be provided for moving them easily to and from the source of supply at the brazen sea. This was done by putting each on a highly decorated brass base or barrow, mounted on four small wheels. The manual labour required to move these weighty barrows may give some idea of the heavy duties attached to the priests' office, and the number of men required for their efficient discharge.

A sacrificial system on a most extensive scale is implied by this furniture of the court in front of and on both sides of the temple entrance. As the book of Exodus describes chiefly the material tabernacle and its furniture, so the book of Kings gives chiefly the material furnishings of Solomon's temple. But the men required to work it in daily practice

are seldom referred to, and never save in the most general terms. Their labours cannot have been light, nor their numbers small. Of the cause of this silence in that book it is difficult for us now to speak. A great gap exists in the narrative, which the politician, who wrote the history, lets us distinctly see, but does not fill up. When he completed the book, the material glories of the temple were a thing of the past, but the arrangements of the priestly class lived on in the memories and writings of men. He may have sought to rescue the former from utter forgetfulness in the belief that the latter could not be forgotten, and would be again revived. But be that as it may, the want of information in the book of Kings regarding the priestly tribe is in startling contrast with the full details given of the temple they had charge of, the doors they guarded, the altars they sacrificed at, the sea and the lavers and the barrows they used. Had the writer of Chronicles not handed down an account of the ministers, by whom the sacrificial system of the temple was carried out in practice, the story of the building and its arrangements would have been incomplete, and might have seemed incredible. He does for the living forces of the temple what the books of Leviticus and Numbers do for the service of the tabernacle. But the differences in this respect among the historical books of Scripture are very surprising. While the book of Samuel presents a view of priests and priests' assistants at the temple, and even lifts the veil to show not fewer than eighty-five priests serving at Nob, the book of Kings, though giving large details of magnificent appliances for sacrifices and sacrificers, utters not one word about priests' assistants, and nowhere mentions more than five priests as engaged in temple duty at Jerusalem. There were reasons for this silence. And behind it was concealed as magnificent an arrangement of the priestly tribe as the historian presents of appliances for their help and convenience. These material furnishings needed living men in well-ordered arrangement to keep them

moving from day to day. History makes it clear that for four centuries after the return of the Jews from Babylon, the magnificence of the second temple was inferior to that of Solomon. It was with the second temple in its least palmy days that the writer of Chronicles (420 B.C.) was acquainted. When he describes the courses of the priests, the divisions of the Levites, the singers, and the porters, he is sometimes thought to be describing not what existed in Solomon's reign, but what he saw with his own eyes in the temple he himself frequented. An assumption is here made which requires proof. Of the temple arrangements in the days of this writer we know little or nothing. But they could not have been such as he describes in his book. If his account of the temple's living forces—the priests and the Levites—be true at all, it can be true only of days long before or long after he lived, of Solomon's or of Herod's reign. The latter is out of the question. The former is the only period to which his account can apply, especially when we look at it as the necessary filling up of the great gap in the book of Kings. If Solomon made ten lavers where Moses thought one enough, and ten golden candlesticks for the one of the tabernacle, and other vessels more numerous in similar proportion, he may well be credited with the arrangements of priests and Levites detailed in the Chronicles.

There is another point on which the historian in the Kings has preserved unbroken silence. While his description of the material appliances for worship is frequently full, and sometimes lavish, not a word does he utter on the water supply of the temple, its source, its cisterns, and the underground channels which involved a large outlay of money and great engineering skill. The Roman historian, Tacitus, gives in few words a picture which we miss in the Hebrew writer: 'The very porches by which the temple was surrounded were a splendid defence: there was a spring of water constantly flowing; mountains hollowed underneath, and tanks and cis-

terns for storing the rain' (*Hist.* v. 12). Of spring and tanks and tunnels the book of Kings says not one word. It is equally silent on the 50 or 60 feet of live rock still seen under the dome of the great mosque on the temple hill, and famous all over the world as *Es-Sakhrah*. These tanks and tunnels and rocks were as essential to the service as the priests and the sea and the lavers. No conqueror would destroy them. An earthquake alone could do them injury. Centuries of misrule by savages have done them little harm. And probably the sacred writer imagined the works which were before the eyes of his readers needed no words from him.

Although the door of the temple was closed against every one, Hebrew and stranger, save the sons of Aaron, a description of its interior magnificence was given in the history of Solomon's reign. No attempt was made to hide from the people everything it contained, and every ceremony that was transacted within. Priests only could handle its sacred furniture, discharge the duties of the place, and realize by sight what others could only call up in fancy. But there was nothing within the temple, even in the most sacred spot, to which something similar could not be found in the court outside. The cherubins of the most holy place we cannot sketch or paint, from never having seen them or heard them described;<sup>1</sup> but a look at the laver-barrows in the court would reveal to a Hebrew their shape and nature. Wings and faces are ascribed to them; but these are words which do not necessarily imply either the wings or the faces of living beings. The 'image' work about them (2 Chron. iii. 10) was only the goldsmith's work in laying on gold plates. Of hidden mystery there was none in Hebrew faith and worship. A temple jealously guarded against the Hebrews themselves was fully described in their historical books. It was a temple of truth,

<sup>1</sup> 'Nobody can tell, or even conjecture, what was the shape of these cherubims.' —Josephus, *Ant.* viii. 3, 3.



which men speak of and view with awe, but which few of them are permitted to enter. The entrance to the temple proper was by a magnificent porch, which could not fail to rivet the attention of all who drew near. If its foundations rose from a deep hollow, such as is known to have existed elsewhere on the hill, its height from base to pinnacle may have been 150 or 180 feet (2 Chron. iii. 4). But on this point there is uncertainty. It was flanked on the south and north sides of its open or eastern end by the two brass pillars which Hiram devised, and of which the one on the south side was called Jachin, while the other, on the north side, was called Boaz. Resting, apparently, on lofty stone pedestals, they rose to a great height, and were surmounted by splendid capitals of brass of the same girth with the pillars, and one-third of their height. Round the capitals were hung chains, and lilies in brass work, besides two rows of pomegranates. Within, the bright brass of the entrance pillars found a contrasted lustre in the gold plates which lined the walls of the porch. Everywhere was to be seen raised work of flowers, oxen, and cherubim, carved on the woodwork of the walls, and covered with gold plate. Passing through the golden-panelled porch or entrance hall, a visitor saw the steps of spiral staircases on either hand, leading to the chambers which were built against the north and south sides of the temple. Priests, princes, and people seem to have all had permission to enter thus far into the house of the Lord. The depth of the hall or portico was about fifteen feet, its breadth was the same as the breadth of the house, about thirty. Evidently there was no furniture in this space. Jonadab, the son of Rechab, was taken into this porch by Jeremiah, and conducted thence to a chamber apparently on the second story, occupied by 'the sons of Hanan.' Next to it was 'the chamber of the princes,' probably a room reserved for meetings when business of importance was on hand. It was not what we might call a court-room; for the princes, on

the only occasion on which we find them sitting in judgment, 'sat down in the entry of the new gate' (Jer. xxvi. 10; xxxv. 1-4). On the ground floor below was the chamber of Maaseiah, the keeper of the threshold, whose duties required him strictly to watch the inner door, leading from the porch to the temple proper. How many of these chambers there were altogether is unknown. They were in three stories. The thick wall of the house was stepped, becoming a cubit less in thickness at the floor of the second story of chambers, and two cubits less at the floor of the third. Cedar beams were laid on the rests thus provided, and the breadth of the rooms on the upper stories was increased by this thinning of the great wall.<sup>1</sup> To what purposes they were devoted, whether as private rooms or storehouses, or public offices, and under whose charge they were, are matters apparently now lost beyond recall. Even the wife of the high priest seems to have had the right of living in these rooms, or in others built on the temple area. Jehosheba, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, saved her infant nephew Joash from the rage of Athaliah, by hiding 'him and his nurse in the bed-chamber,' and by keeping him 'hid with her in the house of the Lord for six years.' The sacredness of the main building of the temple was thus strongly contrasted with the common uses, to which the rooms built against or around it appear to have been put. But the idea was a holy centre diffusing its own holiness throughout all the relations of life.

The door of olive wood leading from the porch into the temple proper was in two halves, each of them double or folding. As the breadth of the whole opening was only about seven feet, that of each of the four leaves cannot have much exceeded a foot and a half. Evidently the design of this arrangement was to render entrance difficult to all who might,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings vi. 8, 'The door for the middle' (or second) 'story was in the south shoulder of the house' (i.e. the projection or shoulder forming the south side of the porch), 'and they went up by winding' (or spiral) 'stairs into the middle story.' For the size of the chambers, comp. *Recovery of Jerus.*, 394.

by surprise or inadvertence, attempt to find their way within. Carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and flowers, covered with gold plate fitted to the inequalities of the wood, adorned the four leaves. On entering, one was struck with the size and magnificence of the well-proportioned House, as it was called. Right in front, at a distance of nearly sixty feet, and with nothing between to break the view, was a similar opening of less breadth and with a door of two leaves. That door was open, but a magnificent curtain or veil, richly wrought and hung by chains of gold, guarded the interior from prying eyes. Nothing more was seen at that door save the ends of two staves, which, though no longer needed, were allowed to remain in their place, relics of a state of things long gone past. The ceiling of the house rose to a height of above forty feet, and the walls were unbroken by windows except near the top. As the roof of the highest side chambers was ten or fifteen feet lower, no curious eye could look down from above into the house below, even if the opening in the walls had been wide enough to allow the attempt. Dim though the light must thus have been at its best, the eye would soon discover that the walls, the floor, the ceiling were covered with gold plate. By carving on the walls, 'from end to end,' figures similar to those on the doors, and fitting gold plate into the heights and hollows of the cedar wood, which was used for wainscoting, the sheen of the gold would be caught by the eye from innumerable points, where it reflected the light from the windows above, or from a candlestick which was kept always burning on the south side of the house. The designer studied effect in this arrangement of the carvings. But, though the purest olive oil was used for the lamps, though indeed it was specially prepared for the purpose, the duties of the priests, who kept this great surface of gold always burnished, must have been heavy and incessant. Over the doorway of the second temple was a golden vine, on which every one who vowed a berry or a leaf, or a cluster, could

hang his gift. No fewer than three hundred priests—probably an exaggeration—were numbered off to keep it bright. But, whatever be thought of this tradition, the more the details of Solomon's temple are studied, the larger is seen to be the army of workers needed to keep them in motion and in order.

On the right hand of one entering the house were seen tables placed against the north wall, five on one side and five on the other, of an eleventh gold-covered table, on which lay twelve loaves of bread, with salt and incense beside them. The tables were each about three feet in length and a little over two feet high; they must have occupied more than half of the north side of the house. Apparently the ten tables on both sides of the central table were intended for holding the gold basons, the spoons and the censers abundantly provided for the worship. On the opposite or south side of the house was a row of golden candlesticks, five on one side and five on the other of the ancient candlestick made in the wilderness.<sup>1</sup> Apparently their position at the south wall was chosen to indicate a relation to the southern sun, the source of light. Whether all these lamps were fully lit up on great occasions is now unknown. But seventy-seven lights in all—for there were seven bowls for olive oil in each lamp—would have filled the golden house with unmatched brilliance, especially as the priests would be careful to use the purest oil, and to keep the

<sup>1</sup> When the temple was burned by the soldiers of Titus (70 A.D.), 'one of the priests, whose name was Joshua, upon his having security given him by the oath of Caesar that he should be preserved, upon condition that he should deliver to him certain of the precious things that had been repositied in the temple, came out of it, and delivered him from the wall of the holy house, two candlesticks, like to those that lay in the holy house, with tables, and cisterns, and vials, all made of solid gold, and very heavy.'—*Josephus, B. J.* vi. 8, 3. Duplicates of many things about the temple were thus common at the close, as they had been at the beginning, of its existence. But, arguing against the historical value of the book of Chronicles, Graf says that in the second temple there were one table of shewbread, and also only one candlestick. Josephus shows how worthless this arguing is.—*G. B.* p. 130.

golden walls and ceiling always burnished to their brightest splendour, free from smoke and dust. A few years, however, witnessed the end of much of this glory. Abijah, the grandson of Solomon, seems to have known of only one candlestick, as if the Egyptian king, Shishak, had, a little before, carried the others off with him among the plunder of Jerusalem. At the far end of the house, and beside or before the curtained door opening into the innermost shrine, was the golden altar, made in the wilderness, and newly covered with gold. Sometimes also it is called the altar of incense, from the offerings made there by the priests. Allowing ample room for the golden tongs, the snuffers, the bowls, and other furniture of the place, the centre of the house must have been a great area, well adapted to accommodate many priests, all discharging their duties at the same time. But if we may judge from the story of Zechariah in the New Testament, it was not the custom for many of them to be engaged there at once; for he was alone in the great room, burning incense before the golden altar, when the vision of Gabriel appeared to him.

Westward, beyond the house, was the Oracle, or Holy of Holies, a darkened chamber, twenty cubits (30 feet) in length, breadth, and height. Evidently nothing was built over it; though chambers were built against it. By the door only could a little light enter the golden, almost empty room. But the cedar wainscoting of the walls, covered with gold plate, was as richly carved as the lighted house in front. In the centre of the chamber were two golden-plated cherubim—figures of unknown form—reaching half-way to the ceiling, with outspread wings meeting in the centre of the room, and touching either wall at a distance of nearly fifteen feet. Below the meeting-place of the wings was placed the ark, made in the wilderness, with smaller cherubim on the lid or mercy-seat. Its carrying staves were left in the pair of gold rings attached to each of its two narrow ends. Although

nothing was in the ark, that is, although nothing was concealed from sight but the two tables of stone graven with the ten commandments, there may have been things which could be seen 'in the side' (Deut. xxxi. 26; 1 Sam. vi. 8, x. 25). If manuscripts of great national value were kept there, copies of them must have been specially taken before the originals were shut up in a room, which was never to be entered save by one man on one day in the year.

The extent of open space around this gorgeous house can now be only guessed. At present the area of the enclosure on which the temple was built is about thirty-five acres, buttressed by rampart walls, which vary in height from thirty to one hundred and seventy feet. The lower portions of these walls, where they were exposed to view by deep shafts and long galleries driven through the accumulated rubbish of ages, are probably in some places the work of Solomon's Tyrian masons. But more recent hands had a large share in the work; for on the north-east upwards of seven acres appear to have been added to the original area a thousand years later. Josephus also ascribes to Herod the honour of having doubled the extent of the original enclosure when he rebuilt the temple (20 B.C.). Probably, therefore, the platform constructed by Solomon's engineers was an area of about twelve acres, or a quadrangle of nine hundred feet by six hundred. It appears to have been divided into two courts,<sup>1</sup> the inner and the outer. 'Three rows of hewed stone and a row of cedar beams' marked the boundary of the inner court. As thousands of people would frequently crowd into these courts, arrangements required to be made for an efficient body of temple police, acquainted with the laws of the place, and empowered to see them respected. Four thousand Levites, called gatemen or porters, were told off for this duty. To

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxxiii. 5, 'two courts of the house of the Lord.' These words apply to Solomon's temple. Do they apply to the temple in which the writer of Chronicles worshipped?

them was committed the charge of the gates and courts. The list of stations for these police guards does not appear to be complete; but it throws some light on the approaches to the temple hill. Westward, that is, fronting Mount Zion, was a gate called *Shallecheth*, or *cutting down* (1 Chron. xxvi. 16), 'by the causeway of the going up.' By 'causeway' was meant an embanked way, leading, partly by sloping rise, partly by steps, from the valley between Zion and Moriah to the level of the platform. This valley is compared to that which separates the Old Town of Edinburgh from the New. In both cases a bridge, an earthen causeway, and a flight of steps connected the divided portions of the city. In Jerusalem the connecting links lay east and west; in Edinburgh they lie north and south. But the rock of Moriah is higher on the western than on the eastern side. Probably, therefore, the gate *Shallecheth* got its name, *cutting down*, from the levelling of the rock made at the head of this embanked approach to the temple. Parbar, which seems to be a word of foreign, perhaps of Persian, origin, meaning a suburb (2 Kings xxiii. 11), was in the immediate neighbourhood of this gate and the causeway. It became famous in later days as the seat of sun-worship; for there had some kings of Judah given horses for the sun. Nathan-Melech, a chamberlain of King Josiah, occupied a chamber in the place, 'at the entering in of the house of the Lord.' These horses were not statues dedicated to the sun. Looking to the foreign origin of the word Parbar, and to the fact of Josiah having 'burned the chariots of the sun in the fire,' we may rather regard them as the living horses kept in honour of the Deity, if not at times sacrificed to him, as was customary in Persia. At any rate, Josiah is said to have made these horses to cease: he 'removed' them, the rendering in our version, is not necessarily the meaning.<sup>1</sup> Another gate went by the name Sur.

<sup>1</sup> The use of the word Parbar, it is sometimes said, could not have been known in Solomon's time; it was a second temple term. But it was known

There was also an ascent by steps from the king's palace, on the south, to the temple court. At the principal entrance, eastward, were six Levites on guard; at each of the north, south, and west entrances were four. But on the south side, at a place called Asuppm, or *storehouses*, were two sentries at each of two points; and at Parbar other two, besides the four at the gate. At these principal spots four-and-twenty guards are enumerated, evidently not the whole number on a circuit of a thousand yards, and for an area intersected by dividing walls. As there were six watches from sunset to sunset, 144 men would be required for duty at these spots alone. But if each regiment of porters numbered only about 350 men, and did service for a month at a time; manifestly, therefore, the 4000 Levite guards, formed from the twelve regiments, were not too many for watch and ward, by day and by night, in the temple.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the 4000 Levites set apart to act as temple police, other 4000 were chosen as singers at the various services. Perhaps we should rather regard these singers as having been mostly picked out from the tribe of Levi a considerable time before. At least, when David brought up the ark to Zion, it was accompanied by a body of musicians, representatives of

in Josiah's reign, and during the first temple. Whether it was known in Solomon's day is of no consequence. The Chronicler, in describing a notorious spot, applied to it a name which it passed under during the existence of the first temple. Even though it was known by that name only in his own day, he did nothing wrong and nothing unusual in using it. The place was the same as of old: the name fixed the place in the view of his readers.

Of Herod's temple Josephus says: 'In the western quarters of the enclosure there were four gates; the first led to the king's palace, and went to a passage over the intermediate valley; two more led to the suburbs of the city; and the last led to the other city, where the road descended down into the valley by a great number of steps, and thence up again by the ascent.'—*Ant.* xv. 11, 5.

<sup>2</sup> The Chronicles state that 'David and Samuel the seer did ordain them to their set office,' and that 'Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, was ruler over them in time past' (1 Chron. ix. 20, 22). Here is a distinct statement that at three epochs of unusual change in the worship of the Hebrews,—in the wilderness, at Nob, and at Jerusalem,—the Levitical porters were arranged by the chief men of the nation. Things were always going wrong, and as constantly some one always appeared to put them right.



him and all his people, playing on instruments made of 'fir wood, even on harps and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets and on cymbals.' And in the only passage of the book of Kings in which the verb *to sing* occurs, Solomon is said to have made out of the almug trees brought from Ophir 'pillars for the house of the Lord and for the king's house, harps also, and psalteries for the singers.'<sup>1</sup> A phrase so definite as 'the singers' leaves no doubt on the writer's meaning. 'Singing men and singing women' in the king's palace cannot be referred to, for 'the singers' (men) only are mentioned. And it would indeed be surprising if, on instruments for a class of men and women so humble, the much-valued wood, which was reserved for adorning the noblest palaces, should have been spent. This service of song was ordained by 'David and Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet' (2 Chron. xxix. 25).

The rest of the Levites, including the priests, were appointed 'to set forward the work of the house of the Lord.' Like the singers and porters, they were divided into courses. Each Levitical course consisted of about one thousand men, and served for a week at a time. The two families of the priests were divided into the same number of divisions, twenty-four. In the one family, tracing its lineage to Aaron's third son, Eleazar, there were sixteen courses; in the other, descended from his youngest son, Ithamar, there were only eight; a proof, it may be, of the cruelty exercised by Saul on that family when he massacred the priests of Nob. A reason for this arrangement of the priests and Levites into twenty-four courses each, is manifestly found in the intention to give to each a week's duty in the temple every half-year, besides the duties they had to discharge in their own districts. Provision was thus made for maintaining a central authority in faith and worship, while local influence was fostered without being unduly

<sup>1</sup> For the definite article and the peculiar use of the word, see LXX. 1 Kings x. 12; 2 Chron. ix. 11, xxxv. 25; 1 Chron. xv. 16. See also *Jos. Ant.* viii. 3.

encouraged. But a farther reason existed for this arrangement of the courses. No priest or Levite was allowed to remain so long at the temple as to learn, from familiarity, to treat any of its sacred duties with levity. A week at one time, and another week six months after, did not allow the feelings of solemnity and reverence, which they brought with them to the sanctuary, to grow dull. A constant rehearsal of the same duties by the same men would, in many cases, have turned the daily worship into a wearisome routine. But new men every week found the routine new, and helped to give freshness to its details. The wisdom of the arrangement is manifest.

On the permanence of these arrangements for the temple service the history may be said to be silent. At long intervals a high priest is now and again mentioned—Azariah (1012 B.C.), Jehoiada (852 B.C.), Urijah (730 B.C.), and Hilkiab (625 B.C.). Sometimes other priests appear in the history, either filling high offices or discharging the ordinary routine of the temple service. But only once does the historian in the Kings speak of the Levites as distinguished from the priests. On no other ground can this one reference to them be explained than on the idea of a class of men, otherwise well known to his readers, requiring neither comment nor historical setting from his pen. In the same way, and for the same reason, he speaks once of ‘the singers,’ once of ‘the altar of gold,’ twice of ‘the altar of brass,’ once of ‘the great altar,’ and once of ‘unleavened bread.’ The silence of the historian is therefore no proof of the arrangements of priestly and Levite courses never having been made, or of these arrangements having broken down in practical working. That they were neglected at times, that they even fell into abeyance for considerable periods, is matter of history. But there is nothing in the silence of the writer of the Kings to discredit the institution of these courses by David and his son, their continuance throughout the monarchy, and their revival on the return of the captives from Babylon.

Even the Hebrew word used to express the courses carries a reader back to a great turning-point in David's life, an escape which neither he nor his men could ever forget (1 Sam. xxiii. 28). It was used previously by Joshua, and afterwards by Ezekiel, of the divisions of the land among the twelve tribes. David used it of the division of temple duties among the men of Levi, the only division in which they can be said to have had a part. As there had been divisions among eleven tribes, from which one was excluded at the conquest, so, at this greater conquest, there were divisions among the one tribe from which the other eleven were excluded.

The dedication of the temple was celebrated with imposing ceremonies and magnificent sacrifices. The time chosen was the feast on the fifteenth day of Ethanim, the seventh month, the Feast of Tabernacles. It fell about the end of September. All the labours of the year were then over. Barley harvest and wheat harvest had long been gathered, and the grain threshed. Olive and vine had also yielded their oil, their wine, and their raisin cake. Firstlings, first-fruits, and tithes had been paid. Peace prevailed everywhere, even in Edom, where the first fires of dangerous war were destined to scare Solomon in later years. Hebrew farmers were free to surrender themselves to the joy of an unusually festive season; 'they were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry.' Special invitations were given to 'the elders of Israel,' as 'the heads of the tribes' and 'the chief of the fathers' were called; for it was their duty to attend at the bringing 'up of the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion.' Not one of them dared to touch that sacred footstool of the Great King; not one of them dared even to put forth a hand in assisting the bearers of the ark to remove it from the city of David to its new home. But they were expressly summoned to Jerusalem 'to bring up the ark.' It was their duty to see that others—priests and

Levites, specially chosen for the work — discharged this service of the faith. And because of this obligation, the elders, by a common figure of speech, are said to have done themselves what others did while they looked on. A thing so plain and so small as this has been perverted into an engine of attack against the credibility of the history. The way in which a Feast of Tabernacles was observed, after the people returned from captivity, has also given rise to misconception. In the book of Nehemiah (viii. 16) there is a description of Jerusalem decked at that season with green booths on the house-tops, in the streets, in the gates, and in the temple courts; the words are added, ‘Since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so.’ At first sight they read as if the feast had not been thus observed during the ages intervening between Joshua and Ezra. But the real meaning is different. Never in all that time had house-top, and street, and gate, and temple court been so decked with greenery. Enemies without compelled the people to keep the greenery wholly within the city. It was an unwonted sight. And it was a way of keeping the feast till then unknown. It was a new application of an old law, and the singularity of the sight took the fancy of all beholders.

Besides the nobles of the land, the people generally flocked to Jerusalem to witness the dedication, and to partake of the royal feast which, they were aware, would follow. On the eighth day of the month the ceremonies began with the consecration of the new altar, which, in later times, was called ‘the great altar’ (2 Kings xvi. 15). For a week this consecration went on with sprinkled blood, and with sin-offerings. The Chronicler has distinctly mentioned these seven days of atonement or cleansing (2 Chron. vii. 9); his object clearly was to throw light on a somewhat obscure passage in the book of Kings, by showing the reference it contains to the book of the law (Ex. xxix. 37; Ezek. xliii. 18-27). For the

author of the Kings had a way of writing which may cause trouble to a careless reader. He frequently lets fall a professional word or idea, which, instead of fully working out, he assumes his readers to be acquainted with, or to have means at hand for ascertaining the import of. Again and again a word occurs only once or twice in his history, without explanation given of its meaning. Its sudden and transitory appearance may surprise us, but did not surprise his first readers. 'Levites' is one of these words; 'unleavened bread' is another; 'pure oil' is a third; 'the destroyer' is a fourth; 'fats<sup>1</sup> of the peace-offerings' is a fifth; and each of these has a history which gives force to its presence and peculiar use in the book. This way of hinting at or presupposing other writings explains the reference to the seven days of altar dedication in the words, 'Solomon held a feast . . . seven days and seven days, fourteen days,' without resorting to such resources of the destitute as marginal comments, various readings, and corruptions of the text. On the tenth day of the month was held the only Hebrew fast of those times—the Day of Atonement. Although the history of Israel preserves unbroken silence regarding that fast for a thousand years after its appointment in the wilderness (Lev. xvi.), it would be rash to infer that either it or other things, about which even a longer silence is kept, were unobserved or unknown.

For several days before the beginning of the feast, people were crowding into Jerusalem. In later times (150 B.C.) it was proposed to legalize three days before and three after the feast as days of 'immunity and freedom for all the Jews' in Syria. And Solomon could not have kept the feast of the dedication unless a similar arrangement had prevailed throughout his dominions. As nearly a million of people seem to have assembled in Jerusalem, Mount Olivet, the public park of the

<sup>1</sup> Found nowhere but in Lev. vi. 12, the parent passage; and in 1 Kings viii. 64; 2 Chron. vii. 7.

city, furnished multitudes of pilgrims, as in our Lord's time, with a camping ground. On the lower slopes of the hill, for a stretch of more than a mile, were booths of green branches, which suggested to the king one of his finest parables, 'The tabernacle of righteous men shall flourish.' In his palace across the valley of the Kedron he must often have heard the joyful hum of that green city on the hill-side. The feast began with a solemn convocation, at which only a fraction of the people can have been present, though all may have looked on from a distance. Apparently this day of a solemn meeting was also the great day of dedication for the temple. But the crowning ceremony was the bringing up of the ark from the house of David to its final resting-place. The temple courts could not have contained a tithe of the crowds who claimed admittance. Then, as in previous ages, representatives of the people stood for the whole nation. But the higher slopes of Olivet, only five or eight hundred yards off, furnished room for many myriads to see and almost to hear the grand proceedings as distinctly as the spectators in the courts.<sup>1</sup> The whole congregation, crowning the hill-top in dense masses, looked down on king, priests, nobles, and Levites. Moriah thus became a stage, and Olivet a most magnificent amphitheatre for one of the grandest displays known in the history of mankind. However crowded the temple courts may have seemed to the spectators on the hill, room was left for the procession to pass, which should conduct the ark to its home in the Holy of Holies. Priests and Levites were the bearers of the ark, the tabernacle of the congregation, and its sacred furniture. The tabernacle and the furniture had been previously brought from Gibeon to Zion. The tent also, which David had pitched for the ark a

<sup>1</sup> Olivet was distant, at most, a Sabbath day's journey from the city, 888 yards (Acts i. 12), and less from the temple. 'At the immense distance of 600 yards,' says Tristram, *Land of Moab*, 33, 'we not only carried on a conversation with him, but, as he proved on joining us, he could hear several of our remarks to each other.' See also Lynch, *Expedition*, etc., p. 428.

generation before, was probably included among the holy things borne in procession. Although the long array of white-robed priests and Levites, bearing the tabernacle and its sacred vessels in advance (Num. x. 17, 21), presented an imposing spectacle to people who had never seen the like before, the interest of the assembly was centred on the ark, which, covered with the vail made in the wilderness, and hiding within the sacred laws of a pure conscience, was borne in the rear. When it set forward, the king, as head of the nation (Num. x. 35), prayed, 'Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee.' A long interval separated it from the rest of the procession, if things were managed then as they had been in the wilderness. When the bearers reached the entrance gates, the singers in attendance seem to have heralded its coming with the song, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.' Behind the closed gates another band of singers answered the demand with, 'Who is this King of Glory?' 'Jehovah, strong and mighty; Jehovah mighty in battle,' was the answering song as the gates opened to admit the Lord of the palace.<sup>1</sup>

If the Levites bore the ark into and through the crowded court, they handed their sacred burden to the priests at the porch of the temple, for they were the only ark-bearers who might enter the holy house. And the king and elders, if they formed part of the procession, corresponding to the tribes in the wilderness who came between the tabernacle and the ark on the line of march, stood aside at some distance from the entrance. A platform of brass-work, about four feet high, and a little over six feet square, had been prepared for Solomon 'in the midst of the court,' on the east side of the altar. The small size of this royal dais shows how closely

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxiv. does not seem so suitable a hymn for bringing up the ark from Kirjath to Zion as for its solemn entry into the temple, ver. 3, cf. Ps. xv. 1.

packed the temple court must have been that day. An hundred and twenty priests with sacred trumpets, and the full prophesying or singing choir of the temple, were present to swell the praise to a volume worthy of the place and the time. Singers of Asaph's band; the harpers of Jeduthun,—similar, it may be, to the body of harpers seen on the stone-cut monuments of Assyria—the horns, the psalteries, and the cymbals of Heman, the grandson of Samuel, numbering two hundred and eighty-eight in all (1 Chron. xxv. 1–7), united with the hundred and twenty priests in this magnificent burst of praise. Music from four hundred and eight singers and players, in an open-air amphitheatre a mile in length and half a mile in breadth, may have deserved a more favourable criticism than that sometimes given: ‘Grand, but to our ears painfully loud.’<sup>1</sup> All of them were arrayed in white linen. Placed on the high ground near ‘the great altar,’ they would be well seen and heard both in the crowded court and on the hill slopes beyond. When the bearers entered the house with the ark, and when the golden bells of the high priest’s magnificent mantle ceased to be heard, the time had come for saying, as Moses said in like circumstances, ‘Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousands of Israel.’ Then, also, the trumpeters and singers expressed the joy of the nation at the fulfilment of their hopes. The hymn of praise was a simple strain suited to the time: ‘Praise the Lord because He is good; because for ever is His mercy.’ Meanwhile, if we may judge from the ‘thick darkness’ of Solomon’s prayer,<sup>2</sup> the waiting crowds observed a cloud settle on the temple. Within, the priests felt an unseen presence as they walked through the holy place to set the ark in the innermost shrine (1 Kings viii. 10): ‘The glory of the Lord filled the house.’ They could not remain within. While the court and the surround-

<sup>1</sup> Engel, *Music of the Most Ancient Nations*, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings viii. 12. The same word is used previously in four passages of the history, Ex. xx. 21; Deut. iv. 11, v. 22; 2 Sam. xxii. 10.



ing hills were ringing with the anthem, the priestly ark-bearers were seen leaving the temple. The high priest, who accompanied them within, seems to have conveyed to the king an idea of the cloud and the presence which filled the Oracle and the house; for Solomon, looking towards the temple-porch, repeated aloud the idea thus conveyed: 'Jehovah said that He would dwell in the thick darkness: I have surely built Thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for Thee to abide in for ever.'

On the great altar lay 'the burnt-offering,' specially chosen to inaugurate the sacrifices of the temple. Portions of other sacrifices seem to have been placed beside it by the priests, who stood near dressed in their linen robes of office. Turning round, the king then faced the people. Conspicuous on the brazen platform, and easily heard in the stillness, he gave the sign for prayer by kneeling down and spreading forth his hands. 'All the congregation of Israel were standing.' The long prayer which Solomon then offered, if not read from a paper, was uttered after careful preparation. Nor would a king so wise and so magnificent be indifferent to preserving a record of the part which he himself took in the greatest event of his reign. Other kings were most careful to hand down, in books or on stone, the campaigns they engaged in and the victories they won. But Solomon's prayer was a grander achievement than any battle ever fought, and the dedication of Jehovah's temple a more marvellous work than any conquest ever achieved. Most justly, therefore, may the king be considered to have carefully provided for the preservation of this prayer among the treasured archives of his kingdom. There are two versions of it—one in the book of Kings, another in the Chronicles. Differences exist between them in the Hebrew original, such as exist between two ancient manuscripts of the same book in other tongues. But the writer of Chronicles does not seem to have thought it necessary to report the prayer with the same verbal accuracy

as the writer of Kings. While the latter retains an old phrase in 'to make wicked the wicked and to make righteous the righteous,' the former thinks it necessary to translate it into, 'to requite the wicked and to make righteous the righteous.'<sup>1</sup> 'Hear the heavens' are words used seven times by the older writer; six times the writer of Chronicles adds the word *from*: 'Hear from the heavens,' and once he leaves the phrase unchanged. But the writer of Chronicles has preserved what the written copy may not have contained, the ending spoken by the king from the fulness of his heart: 'Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place, Thou and the ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness.' (See Ps. cxxxii. 8-10.)

From the thick darkness which seems to have settled on the temple, as on another Sinai, an answer came to the prayer in sight of all the people. A lightning-flash struck the lofty altar, lighted the wood, and 'ate up' the burnt-offering, as the same heavenly fire 'ate up' the flesh, the wood, and the water of Elijah's great sacrifice a century afterwards. The crowded court and the myriads on Mount Olivet beheld the marvellous sight. At once 'the people bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped.' No doubt of the miracle rested on their minds. They did not trouble themselves with inquiring what the fire was, and how it came so opportunely. A flash from the cloud was seen to strike the altar. They asked no more: it was the answer given to their king's prayer. A sceptical age may push inquiry farther, with the result of making the miracle appear more lifelike. The feast was held at the end of the hot season in Palestine. Clouds, lightning, thunder, and rain were all looked for at that season. The temple itself was on the summit of a lofty hill, the place round which thunder-clouds naturally gather. And the great altar, raised high up

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings viii. 32; 2 Chron. vi. 23; 1 Sam. xiv. 47.

with projecting knobs and victim-covered top, was another spot on which a storm-cloud might be expected to discharge its hidden fires. While all these things are true, they shed no light on the marvellous coincidence between the end of the prayer and the lighting of the sacrifice. They only prove that God made 'the winds His messengers and flaming fire His servant' then, as He does still. Natural laws are the ministers whom He appoints to work His will. What science calls the forces of nature, Scripture, with more propriety in the use of words, calls the servants of God. A miracle was wrought that day on Moriah, while every law of nature may have been most strictly observed.

The sacrifices, which were offered immediately after the prayer and on the following days, may seem a display and a waste, if it be forgotten that they were a royal coronation feast. The law prescribed the sacrifices for each day of the tabernacles. But since excess is quite as offensive to the lawgiver as defect, Solomon's magnificent offerings of sheep and oxen may seem to have been misplaced, an hundred and twenty thousand of the former, and twenty-two thousand of the latter. However, the law assigned no limit to peace-offerings. A royal offerer could present any number of them, if he had guests sufficient to consume the pieces not burned on the altar, or given to the priests. And at this feast, the guests were present in vast crowds. By offering the sheep and oxen as sacrifices instead of allowing them to be slaughtered for a feast, Solomon also secured to the priests the choicest portions as a right and not as a favour. But there was enough left for all who came to partake. Twenty thousand sheep and nearly four thousand oxen were slain every week-day. Provision was thus made for about a million of guests. It was a truly royal feast, suited to the ideas of Eastern magnificence which were prevalent at the time. For a whole week the festivities continued. On the eighth day another solemn meeting was held in the great court of the temple.

Solomon again addressed his subjects, and with loudly-uttered blessings from the people to the king, the ceremonies of the dedication came to an end.

No one can read the prayer of Solomon without feeling that the man who wrote it, had an intimate acquaintance with the book of Deuteronomy. From beginning to end it breathes the words and sentiments of that speech of Moses. On this point all investigators are agreed. But a distinction is here drawn, which, however it may be veiled under high-sounding language, really casts a slur on the truthfulness of the historian. The words which he wrote, it is said, may not have been the words which the king spoke. Four centuries intervened between the speaking and the publishing. A compiler of annals in ancient times frequently thought it no harm to his hero and none to truth to become a romancer, while he professed to be a narrator of facts. Words and sentiments quite in keeping with his own time he reckoned it justifiable to attribute to some hero of his book, who lived in days to which these words and sentiments were wholly foreign. The historian in the book of Kings, it is said, handled Solomon's prayer in this customary manner. Perhaps the prayer was not recorded at the time of its delivery, except in part. The historian then wrote such a prayer as Solomon might have been expected to write, had he lived in the historian's days, and enjoyed access to the historian's library. It was a mistake in him thus to confound things that differ. He meant no harm; he intended no fraud. He followed a custom which writers generally followed, or are thought to have followed, but which has been long discarded. Those who adopt this view regard Deuteronomy as a book which did not come into existence till two or three centuries after Solomon. But the historian thought that the king ought to have made large use of Deuteronomy. He made him therefore do as he would have done himself. Clearly, then, the prayer can be called nothing better than, wholly or largely, a manufacture by the

historian. His honesty is thus sacrificed, or his trustworthiness as a writer. If he thought himself able to compose a long piece of eloquent prose, which would serve as a specimen of such writing as came from the wisest of men in the best of his days, he was more than dishonest. He was singularly conceited. But of conceit so outrageous the prayer displays not the slightest trace. For soberness of idea, and for weight of language, it stands high among the finest examples of Old Testament writing.<sup>1</sup> Ignorance is, therefore, the least fault which is chargeable on the historian, if the twin theories of critics be accepted—the late origin of Deuteronomy, and a manufactured prayer for Solomon. A gigantic fraud by a conceited writer is the only explanation possible. But it would require to be supported by proof immensely stronger than the strongest which the advocates of the two theories have yet produced. Solomon was as familiar with the Pentateuch, and especially with its fifth book, as the historian, or any of his critics.

When the king had finished building the temple, he began the other great work of his reign, his own palace. Seven years' labour were spent on the former; thirteen years' labour on the latter. All the resources of a rich empire were lavished on the temple as the nobler work of the two. The king's palace could be leisurely added to or embellished according to circumstances. It consisted of several quarters—the king's house, the house of Pharaoh's daughter, the house of the Forest of Lebanon, the Porch of Pillars, and the Porch of the Throne or of Judgment. Since Solomon's great buildings are said to have been only two in number—the temple and the palace (1 Kings ix. 1)—these different houses and porches must all have formed one group called the palace. As the account given of them in the book of Kings came from the pen of an eye-witness of their grandeur, his description of the

<sup>1</sup> 'An address,' says Ewald, 'which is of extreme beauty, in spite of its length.'

two porches is brief and general. They were well known. The Porch of the Throne was free to all suitors, from whatever part of the kingdom they came. Saul and David dispensed justice in the gate, from a turf seat or a throne such as Eli sat on. But Solomon's magnificent ideas lifted his thoughts far above his brethren, even in the place he used for judgment. Leading up to the Porch of Pillars, evidently from the east or Kedron side of Ophel, was a broad flight of steps, which is rendered 'thick beam' in our version (1 Kings vii. 6). Apparently it opened on to the house of the Forest of Lebanon, which seems to have been the royal audience chamber; and was perhaps also the great banqueting hall. Of the king's house and the queen's house no description whatever is given. They were sealed against the world: but there is one thing related regarding them. Behind the Porch of the Throne was an inner court of similar work, which gave entrance to the rooms occupied by Solomon, by Pharaoh's daughter and the other inmates of the palace. All these magnificent porches and houses were built of costly stones, soft when quarried, which were 'sawed with saws,' and were in the same style of architecture as the temple.

The palace is generally thought to have stood close to the temple on Ophel, part of the southern tongue of Mount Moriah. The south wall of the temple court, which seemed of inconsiderable height when viewed from the temple grounds, looked far higher when seen from the lower level at which the palace stood. An ascent by a broad flight of steps led up from the grounds of the palace to those of the temple. It was of imposing grandeur and solidity, for the Queen of Sheba regarded it as one of the king's most wonderful works. This private approach may have been by a double tunnel similar to the one still existing, which rises by steps to the level of the platform, near the site of the great altar. As the courses of stone in the south rampart wall of the temple enclosure are slightly curved to give them the appearance of straightness,

where the ridge of Ophel by its sharp rise and fall would deceive the eye, there was probably a space between the temple wall and the palace, if the rampart there is older than Herod's reign. A builder's device, so singular as this curve in the joints, seems to imply the possibility of a clear view along the whole face of the rampart, unless the royal ascent partly broke the prospect. The porch of the palace was built after the pattern of the great court and the inner court of the temple, a proof, perhaps, of the neighbourhood of the buildings having compelled similarity in design and workmanship. The eastern front of the palace was apparently the magnificent hall, called the House of the Forest of Lebanon. It stretched for an hundred and fifty feet, evidently along the slope of the hill, and was half as much in breadth. A forest of sixty cedar pillars, forty-five feet high, sustained the roof and the beams which carried the cedar ceiling. They were arranged in four rows of fifteen pillars each, the innermost being sunk in the wall. The three avenues of columns, thus formed, had a window or opening at the one end, and another at the end opposite. 'Light was against light' three times. The area of the magnificent hall was thus divided into eight-and-forty rectangular spaces, each of twenty-two feet by eight. The appearance of this grand hall and of the Porch of the Throne, when the king dispensed justice or received ambassadors from his gold and ivory chair of state, must have been imposing. His 500 guards, standing round with their golden shields, inspired respect and awe, if litigants brought their suits before him, or tributary states presented their tokens of homage. Between two and three centuries after Solomon, Isaiah the prophet refers to the House of the Forest of Lebanon as the arsenal of the kingdom of Judah (Isa. xxii. 8).<sup>1</sup> The Porch of Pillars may have formed a vestibule on the east to this grand hall.

<sup>1</sup> The word for 'armour' is not common. Its earliest occurrences are Ps. cxl.; Isa. xxii. 8; 1 Kings x. 25; 2 Kings x. 2; nor does it occur elsewhere in these books.

Solomon's two great buildings occupied one-half of his reign, and reflected his glory during the continuance of the monarchy, or, more correctly, throughout all future time. Peace had won for him brighter triumphs than war had won for Saul or David. But the defence of his kingdom demanded attention as well as the regulation of its worship. Without the former, experience had shown the danger certain to befall the latter. Apparently he turned his thoughts to the fortresses of the empire, after all the work about his own palace had been finished; the first of them was Millo or Beth-Millo, at Jerusalem. Our knowledge of this fortress is limited to the name. Because it means 'filling up' or 'the place of filling up,' some writers regard it as the filled-up enclosure, on part of which the temple was built. But the names seem too general and too ancient to be interpreted so narrowly. Any place, filled up with earth and stone, might be called Millo (Judg. ix. 6, 20). Probably, therefore, the Millo of Jerusalem was the citadel distinct from the temple. It was certainly not the same as the wall of the city; for in the list of Solomon's public works the two are distinguished; 'He built Millo and the wall of Jerusalem.' To identify it with Acra, as the Macedonians called the higher height on the north-west of the temple, seems more in accordance with the nature of things than any of the other suppositions which have been made; for a castle on that height rendered Jerusalem almost proof against attack by the engineers of those days. Acra was perhaps a little lower than Zion farther south; it was certainly higher than the temple on the east. It was so admirably fitted to be the site of a citadel, that (about 140 B.C.) the Jews lowered the top of the hill by a laborious chipping away of the rock, to prevent its garrison from ever again annoying worshippers in the temple courts. Probably the Tower of David was another castle in the line of defences round Jerusalem. A large garrison held the place; it was 'builded for an armoury, whereon there



hung a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men' (Cantic. iv. 4).

The other fortresses, strengthened or rebuilt by Solomon, lay on the line of march, which invading armies had previously taken; or on the trade routes, which connected the rich lands of Eastern Asia with the seaports on its Mediterranean coast and with the fertile Nile Valley. Hazor, Gezer, Baalath, Bethhoron the upper, and Bethhoron the nether, appear to have commanded the pass, which led from the coast plains to the highlands of Benjamin, and by which, in Saul's reign, the Philistines had pierced the very heart of Israel. Megiddo lay farther north, in the fertile plain of Jezreel. But it also commanded the trade route and the military road between Egypt and the East.

By fortifying the pass into Benjamin, Solomon seemed still to regard the Philistines as dangerous neighbours; or the movements of armies between Assyria and Egypt, which are known to have taken place in those days, may have caused him uneasiness and led him to apprehend danger. In other quarters also he provided against trouble or invasion. 'He built in Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion.' Solomon was well acquainted with the Lebanon district. He delighted in the views which its lofty heights gave him over the greenery of Damascus, and the brown sands of the wilderness, half-way to his own Tadmor, on the road to the distant east. 'The smell of Lebanon' and the streams which leaped down the mountain's sides were figures in his poetry, which showed how deeply the highland scenery had touched his heart. But his survey of the country told him also of the turbulent nature of its inhabitants. Unless they were held down with a firm hand, the through trade from the east, which he wished to encourage, could not flourish. Accordingly 'the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus,' was fitted both to protect the merchant and to overawe the people. A Hebrew garrison was in the city; another garrison watched the road among the hills of Lebanon.

The trade route from Babylon and the most distant east to the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean was, for centuries before and after our era, a source of wealth to the people, who could guarantee the safety of caravans across the intervening desert. The direct road lay from Babylon to Jerusalem and Joppa. But as the way was almost impassable, travellers were compelled to seek a safer, though a longer road. By keeping up the west bank of the Euphrates for about two hundred miles above Babylon, they reached Zobah, where the bending of the river westward greatly narrows the desert. In later ages, if not also in Solomon's time, a bridge spanned the river in that neighbourhood. At its western end was the town of Tiphseh, or Thapsacus (*crossing*), on the north-eastern edge of the Hebrew empire. 'From Tiphseh even to Gaza' Solomon reigned over his own people and over tributary kings. Between Babylon and Jerusalem the breadth of desert is about six hundred miles. From Tiphseh to Damascus it is not above half that distance. And about midway was Tadmor or Palmyra, a rich oasis, where springs of water converted a barren waste into a paradise of beauty; and where the pure air of the desert was laden with healthy life for men. Nature designed the place for the site of a populous city. Perceiving the advantage it presented as a link in the communication between east and west, Solomon fortified the oasis, and secured it from robbers by a garrison, which also served as a police force for the desert. Tiphseh at one end of the trade route, Damascus at the other, and Tadmor in the middle, were thus guarded by Hebrew soldiers, who assured merchants of safety in their journeys to and fro. Gold, ivory, spices, and all sorts of productions from the farthest regions of the East were carried to Babylon, from Babylon to Tadmor, and from Tadmor to Tyre, whose seamen distributed them over the coasts and islands of the Great Sea, if not as far as Britain itself. The traders took back with them from Tyre the white iron or tin of Britain, the amber of the north, salt from the Dead Sea,

olive oil and honey from Israel, and the manufactured goods of Phœnicia or neighbouring countries. Solomon was not the discoverer of this channel for trade. He found it existing in his day. He only took steps to make it safer than it had ever been. And in taking these steps he was strengthening his own kingdom, and might have greatly enriched it as well as himself.

There was another class of public works, which Solomon found it necessary to undertake. 'Cities of store, cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen.' The phrase, 'store cities' or 'temple cities,' is borrowed from the book of Exodus. What Pithom and Raamses were to Pharaoh, these store cities were to Solomon—at once magazines for the garrisons which held the fortresses of the empire; and warehouses, in which goods were stored, when they were purchased by the king's merchants, or received in consignment from abroad. Both ideas are involved in the words. And both meanings may be specially applicable to 'all the store cities which he built in Hamath.' Magazines for war indicate a conquered people, ready to rise at any moment against their masters.<sup>1</sup> Warehouses for goods and for profit bring vividly before a reader the traffic carried on by the king, and the hopes he entertained of broadening and deepening the stream of wealth which flowed into his coffers. A body of merchants purchased horses for the king in Egypt and other markets. The average price of each horse in a drove was 150 shekels, or about £20 in our money. Chariots were also imported from Egypt for 600 shekels, or between £70 and £100 a-piece. Both chariots and horses were sold by the merchants to the petty princes and nobles of Syria and Palestine, a traffic in the king's name which shows the use made of his store cities. In all these arrangements Solomon was thinking of his own

<sup>1</sup> Assur-nasir-pal, king of Assyria, about a century after Solomon's reign, says: 'That city to myself I took; the wheats and barleys of Nirbi I accumulated in it.' 'The chariots and warlike engines of the land of the Khatti I laid up in my magazines' (*Records*, iii. 51, 59, 73).

profit and of his own magnificence. His commerce was a one-sided monopoly. He took no count of the price in the blood of their kindred, and in the produce of their industry, which 'his brethren' had to pay for his selfish indulgence in vain show. A whole nation was toiling and suffering for one man.

'The cities for chariots and the cities for horsemen' contained provision for 1400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen. In the Chronicles, Solomon is said to have had 'four thousand stalls for horses and chariots,' which are strictly in agreement with the one thousand four hundred chariots in the book of Kings. Every chariot had two horses for service. A stall for each chariot would make up the total number required to a little over four thousand. But probably the additional number represented, not the chariots, but the horses kept to supply vacancies in the force, unavoidably caused by accident, illness, and duty. The total number of chariots and horsemen in Solomon's army is so small as to suggest the idea, that Hebrew soldiers disliked the cavalry service. For ages they had been accustomed to fight on foot. Their great generals had won the splendid victories of many wars by armies of infantry, without a horse or a chariot. The new fashion was not popular; and in this the traditions or instincts of the soldiers were truer to science, than the parade of their king. Jerusalem, as might have been expected in these circumstances, was the chief chariot city. It is the only one mentioned in the history. But even tradition retains the fact to this day. The arched vaults underneath the south-east end of the temple enclosure, and on which earth and stones were heaped to increase the area of the hill-top, are supposed to have been the stables in which Solomon kept his horses.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### GREATNESS OF SOLOMON.

(1 Kings iv., ix. 26-28, x. 11-29 ; 2 Chron. viii. 17, 18, ix. 10-28.)

SOLOMON was esteemed great for his wisdom, for his breadth of view in trade, and for his magnificence as a king. Under these three heads enough has been handed down in the tract of thirty pages, which contains the history of his reign, to justify his claims to greatness. By wisdom is frequently understood ability to manage the ordinary affairs of life. So many by-paths leading to danger or to wasted effort lie in our way, that a clear view of the right road to take is a blessing not often bestowed in a high degree on any man. Still more seldom is this blessing combined with theoretical wisdom, as we may call learning and scientific knowledge. As far as can now be ascertained from the scanty details which have come down to posterity, Solomon was endowed with both kinds of wisdom in an uncommon measure. But the gift did not continue with him throughout life in the great development, which it seems at one time to have reached. A blight passed over it, due evidently to vanity and selfishness diverting it from its proper channels.

Of Solomon's scientific pursuits the record is brief:—‘ He spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall ; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.’ By regarding the proverbs and the songs here as a preface to the words which follow, a reader may conclude that Solomon used trees and beasts and birds

as illustrations to give point to the proverbs and enrichment to the songs. 'He spake a parable upon every sort of tree, from the hyssop to the cedar; and in like manner also about beasts, about all sorts of living creatures.' Such was the judgment of Josephus on the nature of the king's wisdom. His view is accepted by some modern scholars. Figures and similes for poems and wise sayings would thus be drawn from the world of nature around. When Agur, in the course of seven verses in the book of Proverbs, enforces his teaching by illustrations from the ants, the feeble conies, the kingless locusts, the spider, the strong lion, a greyhound, and a he-goat, he might be thought to be writing natural history on Solomon's supposed plan. But this is a harsh construction of the words. On the one hand, it served no purpose for the historian to give the information. Every poet and every coiner of proverbs must be largely indebted for materials to the world around him. He who goes through that world with his eyes shut can never hope to be either poet or philosopher. But this construction of the words is unwarrantable as well as harsh. Range of knowledge is implied in the phrase, 'from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall,' not a mere discovery of resemblances in the coining of figures and proverbs. While Solomon uttered three thousand proverbs, he is said to have spoken *about* or *upon* trees and birds and beasts. He may therefore be assumed to have studied botany and natural history, at a time when the study was surrounded by no halo of glory such as surrounds it to-day. What Pliny, in the dedication of his great work to the Emperor Vespasian, said of the study a thousand years after Solomon, applied more truly to it in his reign: 'The path is not one trodden by writers, nor is it such as the mind desires to go abroad on. It requires us to treat with respect common country words, and sometimes barbarous or foreign words, by which alone many things are known.'

In his pursuit of knowledge Solomon instructed his ship captains to bring from beyond seas rare woods and strange animals. Almug trees,<sup>1</sup> apes, and peacocks or parrots are specially mentioned. Whether by *trees* we are to understand merely the wood sawn into logs and boards, or the trunk with its roots and branches also, is a question which the brevity of the narrative renders us unable to answer. But the transplanting of shrubs and plants was practised in very early ages with as much skill and with the same precautions, as gardeners exercise to-day. In the family burying-place of the Thothmes kings, at a period two centuries before the birth of Moses, are paintings which illustrate this subject. 'On one wall is sculptured a whole fleet of ships; they are taking on board the spoils of the country they have invaded; vessels of gold, bales of various kinds of produce. Amongst other things, they are importing trees, the roots of which, with balls of earth and matting wrapped round them, are carried on poles between two men. The same trees appear afterwards in great tubs. In the water beneath the ships are seen the fishes peculiar to the Red Sea, including the sea crayfish.'<sup>2</sup> What Thothmes the First was able to do, perhaps in 1700 B.C., Solomon was not likely to fail in doing about 1000 B.C. Of careful study of plants and trees, of birds and beasts, by the Hebrew king we can entertain no doubt. A branch of science, which remained a poorly-cultivated and a little-esteemed field till comparatively recent times, was regarded by him as worthy of a king's researches in the leisure he could snatch from business of state. Evidently Solomon was in advance of his day. The garden described in the Song of Songs (iv. 12-14) is a proof of

<sup>1</sup> Almug trees seem to have been grown on Lebanon (2 Chron. ii. 8). But this inference from the passage may be unfounded. Cedar and cypress were cut down there and forwarded to Jerusalem. Almug may have come from the same Tyrian source, and by the same Tyrian carriers, and nothing more may be intended. Or the word may be used generally for any fragrant or resinous tree besides the tropical sandal wood, which is commonly thought to be meant.

<sup>2</sup> Villiers Stuart, *Nile Gleanings*, 294.

Solomon's devotion to the study of natural science. A site was chosen suitable for growing the rarest plants which could be found at home or gathered abroad. In some places the heat of Solomon's country sufficed to ripen the cinnamon of Ceylon and the calamus or sugar-cane of India. 'A spring shut up, a fountain sealed' by skilful tunnelling or the enclosing wall of a garden, furnished the plants with the living water required. Persian and Indian names, imported into the Hebrew, described the botanical treasures of the king: 'An orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; cypress flowers, with nards; nard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all kinds of incense trees; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.' Probably the king had gardens in various places, according to the nature of the plants grown; the tropical climate of Engedi sufficing for some, while the sheltered valleys near Bethlehem and Siloam (2 Kings xxv. 4) were more suitable for others. But a more curious example of Solomon's love of odoriferous herbs is found in the names of two of his daughters, which have been preserved by the historian. One was called Taphath, a shortened form of the word for a dropping of wine, or honey, or fragrant juice; the other was called Basemath, or sweet-smelling. Even into these details of family life the wise king carried his love of nature.

Connected with Solomon's study of natural history are the voyages which he undertook to distant parts. His own people were not sailors. But his friend and ally, Hiram of Tyre, supplied him with shipbuilders, pilots, and officers. Of the nature of the partnership which, in some cases, existed between them, we have no information. However, while the building and navigation of the ships fell to the Tyrians, probably the mercantile part of the business was managed by Hebrews. Beside Elath, in the land of Edom, at the head of the eastern horn of the Red Sea, was the port from which the ships sailed. A reef of rocks, known as Ezion Geber, or



the Hero's Backbone, lay outside the harbour. But here we are in a region of conjecture. Akaba, or the waterless island, eight miles south of it, which still shows traces of ancient buildings and fortifications, may have been the port of departure for Solomon's fleets. We can only say it was in that neighbourhood. Solomon is known to have visited the place, apparently to witness the departure of the ships to unknown or distant lands. If kings and queens in recent times honoured with their presence the setting out of trading or discovery fleets, Solomon may be supposed to have shown the same laudable enthusiasm in the cause of geographical research. Elath, beside Ezion Geber on the Red Sea, was thus the chief seaport of the Hebrew empire. No other capable of receiving large merchantmen is known to have existed. Joppa, which is commonly spoken of as a harbour on the Great Sea, was as dangerous for ships then as it is now. Phœnician traders called off the place when the weather was favourable, but they were as suspicious of the coast as the steamers between Alexandria and Beyroot are still. The harbourage was unsafe.<sup>1</sup> Joppa plays a large part on paper in the literature which has gathered round Solomon's voyages. It can have had little to do with the reality. There were two fleets of trading ships, both of which appear to have sailed from Elath. One of them 'went to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon.' In the Chronicles the gold brought from Ophir is set down as four hundred and fifty talents.<sup>2</sup> Of the position of Ophir we are entirely ignorant. Whether it was in India, perhaps the district round Goa; or Yemen, on the Red Sea coast of Arabia;

<sup>1</sup> For these harbours, see 1 Macc. xiv. 5; Strabo, p. 759, 777; Joseph. *B. J.*, iii. 9, 3; Conder, *Tent Work*, i. 1, 2; Robinson, *Palestine*, i. 250.

<sup>2</sup> 'Whereof thirty went in expense for the charge of the fleet and wages of men, and four hundred and twenty came clear.'—Sir Walter Raleigh, *History of the World*, II. ch. xviii. sec. iii. The profits of the Greek merchant who first found the road to Spain (630 B.C.) were considered enormous for one ship—60 talents, £16,000.

or somewhere on the eastern seaboard of Africa, about Sofala, or Zanzibar, or Madagascar, it was clearly a great trading centre at which merchants bartered their goods. Ophir is not said to have been the place which produced gold, precious stones, and almug trees, all of which were brought from it in the 'navy of Hiram' (1 Kings x. 11). Nor did this combined Tyrian and Hebrew fleet discover Ophir, or begin the trade; the two kings only took advantage of an opening, which David's conquest of Edom presented to them, for exchanging their wares with those of a well-known mart. An acquaintance with the place and the way to it, and a previous voyage by Hiram's shipmen, seem involved in the brief record of the venture. On this view the theories which look for Ophir in India, Arabia, and Africa may all be reconciled. The cargoes taken by the navies of Hiram and Solomon on the outward voyage to Ophir are not described. Salt and naphtha from the Dead Sea shores, the products of Tyrian looms, the fine linen spun by Hebrew housewives, the girdles, tapestry, and scarlet which they manufactured (Prov. xxxi. 21-24); possibly also tin from Cornwall, silver from Spain, balm from Gilead, and wheat from Minnith, with olive oil for use as butter or ointment or lighting, and honey or sugar, may have been the staples which they exchanged for gold, precious stones, ivory, and almug or sandal wood. But the ships were more probably 'laden deep with toys,'<sup>1</sup> like the one which Homer describes as having come 'from Phœnicia, famed for skill in arts marine.'

Another fleet, called the navy of Tarshish, receives fuller mention. Evidently it was more important, and was regarded with feelings of greater pride. It is not the same as the

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxvii. 12, 17; *Odys.* xv. 416. The Phœnicians in their first voyages to Tarshish exchanged olive oil and other sea-borne articles of little worth for such masses of silver that the ships could not hold what they got, and they had even to make all their anchors of it (see Bochart, *Works*, ii. 165-170). The Greek word for a toy, *athurma*, has a singular resemblance to the Hebrew word for *abundance* or *riches*, *athereth*. The *toys* of one people may well be called the *riches* of another.

Ophir fleet; for a writer, so sparing of words as the historian in the book of Kings, cannot be supposed to refer to the same fleet and the same enterprise in terms so unlike, with an interval of only twenty lines between the two records: 'The king had on the sea a navy of Tarshish with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks' (1 Kings x. 22). This fleet is often affirmed to have been the same with the other. The writer of Chronicles did not entertain that idea. 'The king's ships went to Tarshish,' he says; nor is any other interpretation possible of the words in the book of Kings. The names of the two fleets are different—a navy going to Ophir, and a navy of Tarshish. The cargoes are not the same, for almug trees came in the Ophir ships only; but ivory, silver, apes, and peacocks are not mentioned. The Ophir venture also is described as a partnership between the two kings; while Hiram is said to have had a 'navy of Tarshish' distinct from Solomon's. In all these respects the two fleets were unlike. They differed in another respect. While only one voyage to Ophir is mentioned, the Tarshish fleet 'came once in three years.' If Ophir were on the road ultimately taken by the Tarshish ships, it may have been the farthest point reached at first, and the profits may have encouraged the two kings to extend subsequent voyages to a greater distance. But those who regard 'ships of Tarshish' in this passage as a common phrase for large merchant vessels, like our last century word *Indiamen*, overlook one fact. It is the first time the phrase is used by the historian. He was speaking also of a place well known in his day. And in the book of Jonah, with which he was acquainted, the phrase used is 'a ship going to Tarshish.'<sup>1</sup>

Tarshish is known to have been a country in the south-west of Spain. Other places nearer Syria had a similar name;

<sup>1</sup> As Ophir came to mean *gold*, so Tarshish came to mean *the chrysolite or topaz of Spain*.

but that region of Spain is generally regarded as the trade mart frequented by the Tyrians. To this day the district retains traces of its Phœnician visitors. Cadiz or Gadara, one of its ancient cities, is a thinly-disguised form of Kadesh, the holy place, or Gederah (fortified). Hispalis, the Latin or Tyrian for Seville, is the well-known Hebrew name of the Philistine seaboard—Ha-shephelah, the rolling plain of undulating ground applied to the country through which the Guadalquivir there flows. The country was under the rule of several princes; for, in a psalm attributed to Solomon, he speaks ‘of the kings of Tarshish and of the islands’ of the Mediterranean (Ps. lxxii. 10). If, then, the second navy of Solomon sailed to Tarshish, we are confronted with several curious problems, which have exercised the ingenuity of scholars for centuries. On the one hand, this navy clearly sailed from Elath, whatever its destination may have been. Not a hint is dropped of Joppa being the port of departure or arrival, or indeed a port at all, except for rafts of wood. If, then, Hiram’s fleet sailed from Tyre on the Mediterranean, and Solomon’s from Elath on the Red Sea, there must have been some point at which they met to prosecute the voyage together, as they are said to have done. But the time allowed for the voyage—once in three years—is also recognised as a serious difficulty. Supposing this fleet to have sailed to India, a distance as great as to Spain, or indeed to Cape Colony, Lindsay, in his *History of Merchant Shipping* (i. 31), regards ‘once in three years’ as ‘a length of time which at first sight seems scarcely credible, yet is accounted for by the habits of those early mariners.’ While he thus recognises the knot, his attempt to untie it is a failure. Spain was not so distant as to require that time for the journey out and home; nor was India or Madagascar.<sup>1</sup> A single season is known to have been sufficient even for the slow movements of those early

<sup>1</sup> The *cinnamon* mentioned twice in Solomon’s writings (Prov. vii. 17; Cant. iv. 14), and once in Ex. xxx. 23, though it has been dragged into this debate,

sailors in going to and coming from Spain or India. So far as the voyage to Spain is concerned, it has to be borne in mind that ivory, apes, and peacocks are not now, and never were, productions of Tartessus. Sir Walter Raleigh, himself a sailor and discoverer, is equally puzzled with the words: 'Whereas it may seem strange that it should be three years ere they that took ship in the Red Sea should return to Jerusalem; the intelligent may conceive of sundry letts in the digging and refining of the metal, and in their other traffick, and in their land carriages between Jerusalem and the Red Sea, and perhaps also elsewhere.' Practical men, like Sir Walter and Lindsay, speak with an authority on this point which few scholars can be expected to have. However, Ritter, in his learned and most laboured dissertation on the subject, acknowledges the difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

Without entering on speculations regarding the course of the ships, we see no practical difficulty in finding a meeting-place for a fleet from Tyre and another from Elath. Egypt was, and had long been, famous for its canals. One of them in the remote past stretched from the river Nile below Cairo to Suez on the Red Sea. After being used for a time, it was neglected amid the troubles of the country, and became partly filled up, probably by the falling in of the banks and by the mud of the inundation. Three centuries after Solomon it was cleared out, and it was used by Tyrian traders, who sailed up the Nile, down the Red Sea, and round Africa. This ancient canal enabled the fleets of Solomon and Hiram to meet; for commercial rivalry between nations was no bar to the free use of an Egyptian water-way. Solomon was a kinsman of

has really no bearing on the point. Greece got the word from Phœnicia (Herod. iii. 111); but where Moses or Solomon got either word or thing is unknown. The *cinnamon*, in our use of the word, is a product of Ceylon. It may have been the same in Solomon's time.

<sup>1</sup> How differently Newman (*Heb. Monarchy*, p. 120) speaks: 'The *three years* allowed for the voyage was long enough to enable the navigators to wait quietly for the month in which they could safely commit their frail vessels to the Indian Ocean.'

Pharaoh; and from the earliest times Phœnicians were welcomed in Egypt as traders and sailors.

Among the uses to which Solomon applied the gold<sup>1</sup> and ivory of his commercial ventures was the making of a throne, which surpassed in grandeur and in workmanship every other royal seat then known. While the body of the throne was wood and ivory, plates of gold covered most of it. So various were the kinds of gold used at Solomon's court, that his workers had three different words to express the quality. Only the finest was employed in making the throne. Although the word is of rare occurrence (*muphaz*), a corresponding term (*phaz*), occurring in Canticles and Proverbs, shows a relationship between the history and Solomon's writings. A display of magnificence, which seems barbarous in its profuse squandering, may have produced a different effect on men's minds in those days from what would be produced now. Six steps conducted to the rounded dais, on which was placed the chair of state. A golden footstool lay in front of the chair, forming a seventh step, and making up a perfect number. On either side of the royal seat were arms, or, upright pillars guarding the king; a lion stood beside each of them. Right and left on every step were lions, forming an avenue of golden lions between which the king moved to his seat of honour. The blessing of Jacob, many centuries before, and probably also the emblazonment on 'the standard of the camp of the children of Judah' in the wilderness, were mirrored in these adornments of Solomon's throne—'Judah, a lion's whelp; . . . he couched as a lion, and as an old lion. . . . The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the submission of the people be.'<sup>2</sup> Other arrangements of the

<sup>1</sup> Solomon's income from all sources, *in money*, was 666 talents of gold. The little island of Thasos had sometimes a revenue of 300 talents from gold mines and trade—gold mines which had been first worked by the Phœnicians (Herod. vi. 46). The figures 666 are more surprising than the amount (Rev. xiii. 18).

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xlix. 9, 10. The word for *submission* is only found elsewhere in Prov. xxx. 17.

palace were on the same scale of magnificent display. 'Ivory palaces,' as the rooms which may have been wainscoted with ivory were called, appear to have been common in Solomon's time and afterwards (Ps. xlv. 8). Myrrh, frankincense, and every fragrant odour known to the merchant were cultivated in the country or imported from abroad to please, perhaps to dull, the senses of those who were admitted to the king's presence. Fragrant odours perfumed the table set before him for meals (Song i. 12). Even when he appeared in public, 'pillars of smoke' from burning incense seem to have heralded his approach, a long step towards a claim of almost equal honours with the great King of the temple, which the priests could not enter except with downcast eyes, and clouds of fragrant smoke. The night watch of the palace also became a piece of display: 'Threescore valiant men are about his bed, of the valiant of Israel: they all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.' What a difference between Saul and Solomon in their thrones and in their night watch! 'Saul abode in Gibeath, under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him.' Such were Saul's throne and court. 'Saul lay within the rampart, and the people pitched round about him. . . . Wherefore hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.' Such was the nature of Saul's night watch. Monarchy had made vast strides towards grandeur and absolutism in two generations.

The appointments of Solomon's life-guards were also a wonder to the crowd. Five hundred of them paraded, when he appeared in state. Of these two hundred carried long shields of gold—apparently alloyed—which covered the whole body, and weighed almost twenty-eight pounds each—about the weight carried by a British volunteer on the march. Other three hundred were armed with a smaller shield, also made of

gold, but weighing only half as much as the larger. Their parade ground, and the armoury for their costly shields, seem to have been in the court and outer buildings of the palace. But the splendour of their appointments was rivalled by the gorgeous palanquin of the king. Its pillars were of silver; its props of gold. The woodwork was cedar; the seat and hangings were of purple; and the centre was 'tesselated with love from the daughters of Jerusalem,' referring to the precious stones given in token of loving homage by places which owned subjection to Jerusalem, or by the women of Zion. Borne in state into the city, or guarded into the temple by his five hundred, all of them appointed with costly shields and swords upon their thighs, Solomon must have seemed to other princes as well as to his own people a magnificent king. But the Hebrew monarchy was losing its truest glory amid this outward show. It sprang at the outset from the goodwill of the people, ratified by the choice of Jehovah. But the price paid for the splendours of Solomon's throne was the alienation of his subjects and the displeasure of heaven. His heart was lifted 'above his brethren,' in defiance of the divine law.

Solomon's great officers of state were nine in number—the high priest, two secretaries, a reminder or recorder, the commander-in-chief, a master of the purveyors or officers of supply, the king's friend, the chamberlain of the palace, and the chief of the tribute. For the last time in history the word *cohen*, *priest*, appears on this list as a title of office given to one who does not seem to have belonged to the tribe of Levi, 'Zabud, the son of Nathan, was a *cohen*,' or principal officer. Along with the king as president, these nine princes, for by that name they were called, formed a cabinet council of ten, a number which bears too manifest a reference to the divisions of a Hebrew army to be accidental. Of the nine princes, Jehoshaphat, who reminded the king of rights and duties while he recorded things done, and Benaiah, the com-



mander-in-chief, serve the son, as they served his father David. Adoram, who was over the tribute at the end of David's reign, may have been the same man as Adoniram, one of Solomon's council ; but, since an officer called Adoram filled this post in the reign of Solomon's successor, the affairs of the department seem to have been managed for two or three generations by members of the same family. Zadok the high priest did not long survive the death of David : he was succeeded by his son Azariah. One secretary sufficed for the business of state in David's reign ; Solomon required two, Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha. The captain of the king's guards, who had been a great man in the previous reign, makes no figure after the first year or two of Solomon's. On the other hand, Solomon raised to high rank Azariah, Nathan's son, chief of the purveyors, and Ahishar, mayor of the palace. Zabud, another son of Nathan, held the dignity of king's friend. Of the nine members of Solomon's cabinet, two, perhaps three, served his father, and three others are known to have been the sons of Zadok and Nathan, the men who were the means of placing him on the throne. Want of gratitude cannot be charged against Solomon any more than against his father.

The purveyors, whose chief Azariah resided at court, were twelve governors of provinces, to whom was assigned the duty of providing supplies for the palace. Each had to attend to this business for a month at a time. They were stationed in different parts of the kingdom, and their districts seem to have been quite distinct from those of the princes of tribes. We cannot be mistaken in regarding their distribution over the country as, in some measure, a necessity arising from the duty imposed on them of lifting the king's tithe from the farmers and landowners, and of forwarding it either to the palace or to the king's private estates. But they were of higher rank, and had more exalted duties to discharge, than the twelve chiefs of his stores, his flocks, and his produce,

whom David appointed as 'rulers of his substance' (1 Chron. xxvii. 25-31). The home province round Bethlehem and Hebron—the birthplace of the dynasty, the scene of David's wanderings, and the original seat of empire—is the only part of the kingdom that is not named in the divisions for purveyance; could it have been left tax free? But the position and rank of the princes put in charge of these provinces do not allow us to limit their duties to providing for Solomon's kitchen. Their number, their names, their rank, rather point toward a design to use them for supplanting the ancient princes of tribes, and for breaking up the recognised division of the land. Had time worked with Solomon, this breaking up would inevitably have taken place. A new division of the kingdom was introduced. It only required time to get root. But events moved too fast for its roots to take firm hold. The free municipal institutions of the Hebrews, in which justice was administered by the town and village elders subject to appeal to the king, cherished a healthy political life in the country. But they would have been displaced by the centralizing shadowed out in these new arrangements. Whoever had the money power in a district, and was in regular correspondence with the palace, would soon cease to regard humbler authorities. Solomon's clear object was to make the palace the centre of all national life. The numerous springs, from which it had hitherto flowed, were destined to be dried up. But the attempt failed, as it deserved to fail.

Purveyance and tribute were two different departments of supply, each with a staff of officials for itself. Azariah was over the former; Adoniram over the latter. Purveyance was supply in kind; tribute was not paid in money, but mostly in slaves or their service. The former was exacted from all the Hebrew farmers; tribute was rendered by wealthy landowners of Hebrew blood, by those who were sprung from the ancient inhabitants of the land, and by many petty

princes within the empire. Gold to a large amount came every year from some, if not from all of these farmers, land-owners, and princes. Part of the supplies for the palace may have come from the king's private estates, for, however these were acquired, they are known to have been of great extent even in David's time. But the court and its dependants were a heavy tax on the industry of the Hebrews. Not fewer than fifteen or twenty thousand people were supported in wasteful idleness on revenues wrung from the nation for the king's use. Barley also and straw had to be provided for several thousand horses of different breeds,<sup>1</sup> kept at various places for Solomon's chariots and cavalry. The drain on the resources of the nation for these purposes alone was enormous and largely unnecessary. Horses were not employed by the Hebrews for fetching and carrying, for the labours of the field, for posting, or for hunting. They were used by Solomon for show only; their services were seldom or never required in war. If, then, the king claimed a tenth of the increase of fields and flocks and herds, besides the tenth granted to the Levites, the yearly supplies of the palace, if we may assume them to correspond to this tithe, furnish a means of approximating to the wealth and the annual produce of Palestine in Solomon's reign.

Between the reigns of Saul and Solomon a great development took place in the literature of the Hebrew people. It is seen in the arrangements of the king's court, in the writing of national records, in the proverbs which circulated among the people, and in the numerous hymns of the national worship. Of Saul's chief officers only one is mentioned in the history—Abner, the commander-in-chief. David, on the other hand, appears surrounded by a body of able men, to whom

<sup>1</sup> 'Horses and dromedaries' in our version, 1 Kings iv. 28. The word translated *dromedaries* occurs in only three other places, Mic. i. 13, Esth. viii. 10, 14, and seems to mean a horse of superior breed.

the various branches of the public service were entrusted. Of these one was book writer, or, as we should call him, secretary of state, while another was recorder or historian. But in Solomon's reign, the writing of public books or state papers had largely increased. Instead of one secretary, he had two, and also a recorder. Besides them, others were engaged in writing the history of the king. Nathan the prophet, Iddo the seer, and Ahijah the Shilonite were of the number. To these six writers must be added the king himself. Seven writers of history, poetry, and philosophy are thus mentioned during the life of Solomon. It is a large list to be found in a record so brief. But it indicates an increasing familiarity in the nation with all sorts of literature. And the short review given of the king's own works discovers to us at a glance a book-selling and a book-reading people: 'He spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five.'<sup>1</sup> About a fifth part of his proverbs, after being brought together in a handbook, were probably circulated in writing among the people (Prov. x.--xxiv. 22), with a preface of songs and a concluding ode in praise of wisdom (Prov. i.--ix., xxiv. 23--34).<sup>2</sup> More than two centuries later this handbook received additions from the learned men of Hezekiah's court, who 'transferred' to it, from a fuller book of proverbs, about one hundred more (Prov. xxv.--xxix.). In other countries, as well as in Israel, books of proverbs have shown a tendency to grow in size and number with the lapse of time. We do not require to ascribe all the proverbs in these

<sup>1</sup> Spain has long been famous for its books of proverbs. The earliest collection, consisting of a hundred in rhyme, besides six hundred more, 'such as the old women were wont to repeat in their chimney-corners,' dates from 1508 A.D. In 1675 another collection was published of 6000, and a century later, another still of 24,000.

<sup>2</sup> The conflicting dates given to the various parts of the book of Proverbs only show the impossibility of guessing truth in the matter. Solomon's hand is seen in most of this manual by writers on the subject; it is frequently denied that he wrote either preface or conclusion. But if the songs at the beginning and the end are denied to be his, equally good reasons may be urged for refusing to him the proverbs also.

writings to Solomon as their first author. He was collector as well as inventor. Sententious sayings were common long before his day, as we see even from the proverb quoted by his father, David, 'From the wicked goeth wickedness' (1 Sam. xxiv. 13). Amid the darkness which covered those distant ages, and in their brief memorials of men's lives and works, we can thus see clearly a large body of thinkers and writers, a people who enjoyed literature, and took means for diffusing knowledge. 'To write' had even come to be used with a figurative meaning in the ordinary language of Hebrews, an indication of great advances made by them in acquaintance with the art: 'Write them upon the table of thine heart' (Prov. iii. 3, vii. 3), where the reference to the two tables of stone is unmistakeable.<sup>1</sup> Familiarity with writing and with books is implied in this proverbial use of the word far more than in the Greek poet's 'mindful tablets of the soul,' coined for the Athenian theatre by Æschylus five centuries afterwards.

A book of proverbs is less intended for private reading than as a means of verifying what is said, or of refreshing a learner's memory. Proverbs—'the wit of one man and the wisdom of many'—are the ready money of thought, passing rapidly from man to man in the interchanges of life. Books may be used for handing them down to future ages, but movement and fire can be given to them only in spoken application to the actings of men. Proverbs are not for lonely reading by the learned; they are rather for use in the homeliest as well as in the weightiest business of the world. To find a book of this kind in circulation among any people implies, therefore, great advances in literature. Gathering wisdom from the sayings of others, coining of it into words from observing their doings or the results, and committing the whole to writing, are three stages of progress all brought together in the book, but of

<sup>1</sup> This word occurs in thirty-nine passages of the Old Testament, usually applied to the tables of stone. Exodus and Deuteronomy contain it in twenty-nine; the reign or books of Solomon six times, and all the rest of Scripture four times.

which the last could never have suggested itself to a man who had no reading public to appeal to, and no broad basis of literature to rest on. Although, then, a book of proverbs is not a source from which much knowledge of the author's literary or scientific attainments can be gleaned, still something may be learned from it of the ways and thinking prevalent in his time. A word or a line here and there may suggest older books which he read, and from which he borrowed, thus opening up to us a view of the writings with which both he and his age were familiar. We have seen one example of this already in the word 'table.' There is another, perhaps more striking, in the phrase, occurring four times, '*a tree of life:*' '*Wisdom is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her.*' The want of the definite article in these four cases, and the presence of it in the story of the Fall, '*the tree of life,*' show conclusively the writer of the book's acquaintance with the first chapters of Genesis (Prov. iii. 18, xi. 30, xiii. 12, xv. 4; Gen. iii. 22). And to the same result tends his peculiar phrase, three times repeated, '*way of life:*' '*He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction,*' for it is but a shortened form of the closing words in the passage (Gen. iii. 24), '*A flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.*' A third phrase, drawn from the same source, but having its immediate origin in the book of Psalms, is '*a fountain of life*' (Ps. xxxvi. 9). It is found four times in the Proverbs, and only once elsewhere in the Old Testament. Nor is the story of the Fall the only section of Genesis with which the writer of Proverbs shows his acquaintance. A line or two after his first mention of a tree of life, he adds, '*By his knowledge the depths are [were] broken up,*' words which it is hard to ascribe to any other source than those in the story of the Deluge, '*The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up.*' But other books are quoted or clearly referred to. '*An house full of sacrifices,*' meaning an house full of animals slaughtered for a feast, indicates a use

of the word 'sacrifice' which derived its origin from the book of Deuteronomy. 'The lamp of the wicked shall be put out,' and 'the commandment is a lamp,' recall a figure which we have already traced to the ever-burning lamps of the golden candlestick, 'the lamp of Israel.' Although this most expressive figure is unknown to the book of Deuteronomy, although even the word for lamp does not occur in it, the passage from Proverbs is clearly a later echo of a passage from Deuteronomy, the concrete preceding in the order of time, the refining on it following, thus :—

DEUT. vi. 7-9 (xi. 18, 20).

These words . . . thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy sons, and shalt talk of them in thy sitting in thy house, and in thy walking by the way, and in thy lying down, and in thy rising up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

Prov. vi. 20-23.

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thine heart : tie them about thy neck. In thy walking it shall lead thee : in thy lying down it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law light.

The originality of the passage from Deuteronomy is clear. While it is concrete, popular, and detailed, the ideas in Proverbs are a philosopher's reflections on something concrete which preceded. They are scientific and terse, the result of study. Whether the latter were Solomon's writing, or two centuries later, they carry the antiquity of Deuteronomy far higher than the reign of Hezekiah. If that antiquity be once admitted, there is no stopping-place short of the conquest under Joshua.

It is specially worthy of remark that the book of Proverbs contains no reference to priests or Levites or to the temple. Nor are the words for *harp*, *lyre*, *timbrel*, *trumpet*, *cymbal*, *pipe*, and other musical instruments found in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or Canticles. Even *to sing* and *song* occur only in five passages. A place so prominent and of such world-wide fame as the temple would have found a niche in some corner of the

Proverbs, had it been built at the time. But neither that glorious house nor its ministers, the priests and Levites, seem to have occurred to the writer as fitted to point even one of his many morals. How different from later times! A century after Solomon, 'Like people like priest' (Hos. iv. 9; Isa. xxiv. 2) had become a proverb; and Jeremiah evidently quotes another in 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these' (vii. 4). Some of the ancient translators felt this want, for Wisdom, 'standing in the top of high places,' is represented in the Syriac version as standing on the pinnacles of the temple, a rendering which the passage cannot bear. Three times does the word 'high places' occur, in two of them under the form 'high places of the city.' Schools of the prophets or colleges of learning may be hinted at in the phrase; but neither the word nor the idea has the remotest reference to forbidden high places of heathen or debased worship. Wherever the word is found in the Old Testament, it is used with a meaning of highest honour. Probably also 'high places of the city' may be but an echo of words found in an earlier book, for they closely resemble 'the high places of the field' in Deborah's song (Judg. v. 18).<sup>1</sup> Neither, then, to priest nor to temple or forbidden high places is there a reference in the book of Proverbs. But prominence is given to *sacrifices* in both meanings of the word, to a body of national teachers whom we found merely hinted at half a century earlier, to pupils, and to the law which they all studied. While there is nothing to keep us from regarding the teachers as members of a recognised guild, the pupils certainly belonged to all classes of the community. A written law book seems an unavoidable conclusion from this view of the case.

The frequent use of the word *seven* in the book of Proverbs, especially in one passage which, if literally taken, becomes

<sup>1</sup> Prov. ix. 3. The word for *top* occurs only here and in the ancient law book, Ex. xxi. 3, 4.



historically incorrect, is not without value : ‘Seven things are an abomination unto him ;’ ‘the thief shall restore sevenfold ;’ ‘Wisdom hath hewn out her seven pillars ;’ ‘a just man falleth seven times ;’ ‘the sluggard is wiser than seven men that can render a reason ;’ ‘there are seven abominations in his heart ;’ and the seven examples from the lower animals (Prov. xxx. 25–31). When taken along with a similar use of the same number in earlier books, this figurative meaning in Proverbs leaves on a reader’s mind the conviction of a division by sevens playing a leading part in the daily life of Hebrews. It was also a common feature of Solomon’s writings. We see it in the seven petitions which stand prominently out in his prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings viii. 31–50), a proof at once of its genuineness and its antiquity. Evidently this division by sevens was not in military affairs, for there the reckoning was by fives, tens, hundreds, and thousands. Clearly, too, it had come to mean perfection, for a restoration sevenfold by the thief is opposed to the oldest Hebrew law—twofold, fourfold, or fivefold—which was unquestionably known to the writer of the Proverbs. The historical examples of the use of seven in earlier books prove the division to have had reference to time. But the figurative application is more common in the Proverbs than in other books. Manifestly it indicated a division which touched the deepest feelings of the common people. But the Sabbath, or the week—‘a seven days’ is the phrase in Samuel—is the only Hebrew institution which can account for this use of the number seven. And from no other root can so many different branches be imagined to have sprung. In Solomon’s days, and for ages previous, therefore, the Sabbath must have been a recognised institution among the Hebrews.

The utter absence of coarseness in Solomon’s Proverbs, and the traces everywhere of a refining influence at work on the homeliest themes, indicate a lofty conception of the work he had undertaken. When ‘short sentences drawn from long

experience,' to use Cervantes' definition of a proverb, express the sentiments of the vulgar, they are apt to take a colour from the minds by which they were first coined. Nor is there any reason for regarding Solomon as the originator of all the sayings in his book. Unquestionably not a few of them were of the humblest parentage, though ultimately adopted by the great king. But every trace of their lowly birth is lost in the purity with which they have been presented to the world. Nor can it be denied that to most proverbs an origin in history could be assigned. 'Spanish proverbs,' it is said, 'can be traced back to the earliest times. One of the best known, "Laws go where kings please they should," is connected with an event of importance in the reign of Alphonso the Sixth, who died in the beginning of the twelfth century, when the language of Castile had hardly a distinct existence.' Our own 'Evil be to him who evil thinks' is two centuries later. But we can ascertain the historical origin of very few of Solomon's sayings. That, in several cases at least, they were rooted in the history and institutions of the land, we have already endeavoured to show. To regard them as hanging loose from the national records, or as having a life of their own apart from the life of the people, is unreasonable. They draw the sap of their existence from the history. And the more we discover the channels through which that sap flows, the better shall we understand a proverb and its interpretation.

The book of Ecclesiastes, more than the book of Proverbs, has been a battlefield for scholarly criticism and doubt. Many eminent writers lean to or adopt the idea that it was not written by Solomon or in his age. They regard it as a parable composed five or six centuries later by an author whose name has perished. Nor are reasons wanting for this view. But it does not furnish a complete solution of all the difficulties connected with the book. And several of the reasons by which it is supported are now found to be un-

tenable. The book is not written in the style of Moses, or of Samuel, or of David. Much of it resembles the oldest part of the book of Proverbs, which there is every reason for assigning to Solomon. It does not represent the ancient Hebrew faith. It is the reproduction, by one imbued with that faith, of a philosophy current, perhaps, among his eastern and southern neighbours. An Israelite, thoroughly devoted to the religion of his forefathers, and struck at the same time with the peculiar wisdom which he found in the writings of heathen moralists, could have written Ecclesiastes by viewing the world of men from both these sides. While the book is allowed to be a blend between Hebrew faith and heathen philosophy, it is an extremely narrow view to regard that philosophy as the philosophy of Greece; for it may have been the philosophy of Babylon, or of Egypt, or of both. If, then, Solomon was the writer, we do not require to assign the book to the end of his reign, or to consider it the repentant fruit of his personal experience. Wise men, discovering in old age their mistakes in life, adopt a more sober and less defiant tone than it displays. By regarding the book as a speculation, we may be nearer the truth than if we regard it as an experience. In the one case it may be the work of a man comparatively young; in the other, it must be the work of an old man, of which it contains no proof. While there are in it vivid descriptions of a round of pleasure, and perhaps of vice, its pages show scarcely any traces of the sobriety of age, repenting of the misdeeds of youth. The book bears the stamp of a philosopher's work, not of a repentant sinner's, or a returning prodigal's. And many a thinker in Chaldea and Egypt had before him the history of princes, from which every line of the descriptions might have been borrowed as readily as from Solomon's. The book may thus have been written in Solomon's early manhood, as a fruit of his conversation with learned foreigners, and of his studies in their philosophy. The parable theory takes far too narrow a view

of the circumstances. It cannot look beyond Palestine. Or, if it does, it looks no farther than to a few incidents related by Greek writers, whom it reads only to suit its own purpose, and sometimes contrary to fact. But the book is not so limited in its scope. It surveys the world of civilised men as a whole, not the small province of it bounded by the circumference of Palestine, and acted on by faint echoes from Greece. And nothing is advanced by the authors of the parable theory which lifts them or it above this narrowness of view.

The number of Aramaic or Syriac words and forms in the book of Ecclesiastes is the chief, perhaps the only, argument for its late origin and parable form. According to the view often taken, the language in which it is written could not have been in use when Solomon was king. It had no existence till five or six centuries afterwards. If this is correct, there is no room for further argument: the parable theory must be accepted. But the antiquity of the dialect in which the author wrote is unknown, notwithstanding the assertion of Delitzsch that, if the book be of the age of Solomon, there can be no history of the Hebrew language. Only one thing is certain about the language. It was a cross between the Hebrew tongue and that of the Syrians on the north and east of Palestine. But wherever those who used the former came in friendly contact with those who used the latter, the dialect of which we are speaking might suddenly originate. This or something similar took place in Nehemiah's time, when the children of Jews, who had married women of Ashdod, 'spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language.' What happened at that late period in the history may have happened five or six or seven centuries before under similar circumstances. As friendly intercourse between men who spoke Hebrew and others who spoke Syriac did not begin during the Babylonian captivity, a theory which rests on the idea that it did then begin has no

foundation in fact. Their intercourse dated almost from the settlement of Israel in Palestine. The dialect which thus arose may have been spoken for ages along the borders of Ammon and Damascus. Solomon's first and favourite wife, a princess of Ammon, may have used its words and forms in his own palace. So also may the wise men of the east, referred to in the history. To assign the rise of the dialect used in Ecclesiastes to the Babylonian Captivity, is to shut one's eyes to the facts of history, or to confine them to an area unduly limited by an illiberal prejudice. To this day in Palestine 'the peasant dialect proves to be much nearer to Aramaic (which Jerome says was the native language in his time) than to modern literary Arabic.'<sup>1</sup> History, so far as it is known, thus shows no respect to a theory which pronounces it impossible for Solomon to have written in any language but the pure Hebrew of his own age. At that very time 'a memorial tablet in the language of Babylon' was set up in the Nile Valley by a king of Assyria, who may have been Solomon's father-in-law. A foreign tongue was thus written in the land of Egypt by its king. And in those very days 'a multitude of Aramaic' (*i.e.* Hebrew or Syriac) 'words were introduced into Egypt, and it even became the fashion to give an Aramaic form to native words.' Besides, the language in which the scribes of Nineveh recorded the events of history was altogether different from that spoken by the people around them. A fact so well ascertained needs no proof. Solomon, speaking pure Hebrew in his own court, and writing a dialect of it in a philosophical treatise, which was modelled on the conversation or writings of thinkers who may have used the same or a kindred form of speech, is not a singular feature in the world's history of that age. It was a common thing. The fashion had been set by the wisest men of other lands. And, since then, the fashion was followed for ages by the scholars of modern Europe, who preferred Latin

<sup>1</sup> *P. E. F. Quart. Stat.*, Jany. 1873, p. 2.

or French to their mother tongues. Solomon may thus merely have adopted a practice sanctioned by ancient custom or philosophic caprice. To deny this is to permit our ignorance arbitrarily to limit his rights or his power.

The language of the book of Ecclesiastes cannot, therefore, be held to disprove Solomon's authorship. Other arguments of less weight have been advanced. One of them is an inference drawn from the words, 'Of making many books there is no end' (Eccles. xii. 12). Books were therefore very common when this treatise was written. Can they be said to have been common in the age of Solomon? The answer expected to this question is, *No*. Were books manufactured in abundance under the Persian kings, five centuries later? The answer returned is, *Yes*. On these assumptions, for they are not proofs, the complaint about the making of many books is accepted as evidence of the late origin of Ecclesiastes. But no one, whose attention is called to the subject, would think of comparing the literary activity of the Eastern world under the Persian kings with the same activity before and during the lifetime of Solomon. The latter was especially a season of bookmaking in Egypt, in Israel, in Phœnicia, and in Mesopotamia. Compared with it, the era of the Persian kings was an age of barbarism and darkness, of libraries destroyed, and of literature extinguished. A point so well known stands in no need of illustration.

Equally unsatisfactory is the attempt of Ewald to find a reference to the times of the prophet Malachi in the words, 'Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the Angel that it was an error' (Eccles. v. 6), compared with, 'The priest's lips should keep knowledge, for he is an angel of the Lord of hosts' (Mal. ii. 7). The only possible comparison in these two passages is between *the Angel* and *an angel*, phrases so unlike in their definiteness as to render comparison impossible. But there is a passage in the Pentateuch, of which the verse in Ecclesiastes may justly be called

a copy: 'The priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation, and it shall be forgiven them, for that it was an error: and they shall bring their sin-offering before the Lord for their error' (Num. xv. 25). 'That it was an error' is exactly the same in both passages; 'before the Angel' of the one is represented in the other by 'before the Lord;' but the previous chapter in Numbers suggests the Angel of the covenant, who was to lead the people into Canaan (Ex. xxxii. 34). The passage relied on to prove the late origin of Ecclesiastes thus becomes a by no means obscure proof of the antiquity of Numbers.

The historical references in Ecclesiastes are also believed to prove its late origin. According to the view frequently taken, Israel was then under foreign kings, who gave much occasion for complaint, and to whom the people paid an unwilling obedience. But all this is matter of suspicion or imagination. Not a word is said in the book itself which can fairly be held to justify these views. Kings are spoken of, and princes, and provinces, and people. But the writer is thinking of kings and people generally, as a philosopher would; and not of foreign kings ruling over his countrymen, or of Jews bowed beneath a hateful tyranny. The narrowness of vision, which sees nothing but Palestine or a part of Palestine in the book, cannot do justice to the work or its author. If Solomon wrote it, his acquaintance with the nations of the civilised world enabled him to take a breadth of view, and to support his conclusions by a range of historical examples, which are far above the narrowness of his most distinguished critics. Even Delitzsch has recourse to the Greek fables regarding Astyages and Cyrus to explain the passage, 'Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king; for out of prison he cometh to reign' (Eccles. iv. 13). The parallel which he attempts to draw can satisfy no one acquainted with the story. He also thinks Themistocles analogous to 'the poor wise man,' who delivered

'a little city, and few men within it' from 'a great king' (Eccles. ix. 14, 15); but he forbears to remark the unsuitableness of the rest of the description. If he be correct, the writer of Ecclesiastes was grossly in error when he added, 'There came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.' Xerxes, the great king supposed to be referred to, did not besiege Athens, and did not build bulwarks, great or small, against either the city or its Acropolis. If Delitzsch's view be correct, the writer of Ecclesiastes was a blunderer in commonplace matters of almost contemporary history. Croesus also, and other creatures of the imagination, are seen in the book. One may well wonder how so careful a writer as Delitzsch could have been led away by these fanciful analogies. Whoever, then, was the author of Ecclesiastes, and whatever was his object, Solomon is not excluded by any of the arguments which have been urged against his claims. It may not be easy to prove an affirmative in the matter. Meanwhile, the often attempted negative, instead of being a success, has only resulted in convicting the critics, who attempt it, of narrowness of view. What Ecclesiastes makes of human life, the authorship of the book remains to its readers—a puzzle.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE FALL OF SOLOMON.

(1 Kings x. 1-10, xi. 1-43; 2 Chron. ix. 1-9, 29-31.)

AFTER the building of the temple and of his own house, Solomon continued for a time faithful to the worship and legislation of his people. For the first twenty-four years of his reign there was no change in the principles with which he set out in public life. He was then about forty-five years of age;<sup>1</sup> his experience of the world had been nearly as varied as his father's; and his opportunities of gathering wisdom from all quarters had been perhaps greater. Fifteen or sixteen years before the end of his life, he is found displaying a zealous regard for the honour of Jehovah. The incident referred to is usually quoted, though most unfairly, to his discredit. His palace was finished; the house or quarter prepared within it for the queen, Pharaoh's daughter, was finished also. But a reason is given in the Chronicles for building this queen's house. 'My wife,' he said, 'shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come.' The step which Solomon thus took, in removing his wife from the house of David to her own house, has been harshly judged as a pedantic display of bigotry. But there is nothing in the words to warrant this conclusion. The removal of the queen may have happened thirteen years after the ark had

<sup>1</sup> This is based on Rehoboam's age, 41, at his accession, as given in 1 Kings xiv. 21. No trust can be placed in the statements of the Vatican Septuagint (1 Kings xii. 24) that he was then sixteen years of age, and that he reigned twelve years; for at 1 Kings xiv. 21 the numbers given in that version are the same as those in the Hebrew, 41 and 17.

been consigned to its resting-place in the temple. If not, there must have been an interval of several years between the two events. Not a word is said in the passage about defilement from an Egyptian's presence in the house of David. On the contrary, Solomon is expressly said to have lodged her in the city of David only till his own palace was finished (1 Kings iii. 1): he entertained scruples of conscience on an entirely different ground. Even after this removal to her own house, the queen was still in the city of David. But although her palace was there, she ceased to live in that part of it formerly known as the house of David. Solomon's scruples then were about the house of David, not about the queen's apartments, or about the whole city. The ark had come to his father's house. It had been kept for many years in the palace grounds. Sacrifice had been offered, and national prayer had been presented there; 'the places were holy.' Solomon evidently did not regard the place as suitable for the dwellings of men. It belonged to the King of the ark, whose presence had made it holy. Solomon may therefore have given back to the ark that portion of the palace grounds, which it sanctified in his father's time and for ten years of his own reign. The site was holy to Jehovah; it belonged to His temple, and was probably therefore added to its courts or buildings.

Another incident which sheds a clearer light on the beginning of the king's apostasy, took place within fifteen years of the end of his life. A vision of the night had appeared to him at Gibeon, early in his reign, which promised blessings to himself and to his kingdom, if he walked in the ways of David his father. It did not call for repentance for past misdeeds; it was a bright vision of exceeding gladness. To quote David's last words, it was 'as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds; from the clear shining after rain was coming fresh green out of the ground.' There was not a word of threaten-

ing, and it ended with the promise, 'Then I will lengthen thy days.' It was such a vision as would be given to Jedidiah, the Beloved, or the David of Jehovah, as Solomon was named by Nathan (2 Sam. xii. 25); and it was a vision which he who saw it would be likely to embalm in the song he seems to have written, 'So he giveth his Beloved sleep' (Ps. cxxvii. 2). While the temple was in progress a message came to him from the Lord, evidently by the hand of a prophet, renewing the bright promises for king and people if the law were kept by them both. But when wealth had poured into the country for four-and-twenty years, and when magnificence in everything had borne witness to the fulfilment of the promises then made, another vision appeared in dreams of the night. There is far less of sunshine the second time; a dark shadow, much unlike what formerly appeared in Gibeon, stretches over the king's path. Its words of threatening were twice as many as its words of promise. The first vision in Gibeon was clearly Promise; the second in Jerusalem was as clearly Warning. As time had seen the Promise fulfilled, so a more distant time might find the Warning come true. Solomon stood at the dividing of the ways when he saw the second vision. He was still an honoured servant of Jehovah (1 Kings xi. 9). But his conscience was becoming uneasy; the beginning of apostasy was at hand. One of the greatest penalties paid by a man for the possession of unusual mental power is the thick crowding in on his mind of doubts, from which other men are free. Solomon paid that penalty. Great attainments, great resources, and great wisdom had lifted him above the common rank, more than his royal seat lifted him above his people. But they were not accompanied in the latter part of his reign by the calmness of judgment which distinguished its beginning and its middle. Doubt had entered; and in the battle with doubt the wisest of men was signally worsted. The lifting of his heart 'above his brethren,' pride of rank and of high attainment, had made a

rent in his armour by which doubt and apostasy found an entrance to his heart. He had warning of his danger from the vision. He seems also to have had warning from facts, while it was still possible to withdraw his steps from the brink to which they were leading him. Warning from principles, which he was disposed to violate, was strengthened by the warning from facts, which were occurring before his eyes. And yet the magnificent psalm on the King of Peace, which served as a mirror to reflect a greater coming glory, appears to have been written in the latter years of his life (Ps. lxxii.). Often there seems to be but a step from the clearest spiritual light to deep spiritual darkness.

Troubles arose on the north-eastern border of his empire, apparently amid the once powerful Hittites, small at first, but gradually growing till they blackened the political outlook. A captain or soldier of Hadadezer, whose confederated armies David effectually smote thirty or forty years before, had escaped from the overthrow, and found refuge in the Syrian desert. Rezon, as he was named, gathered around him a troop of marauders or patriots, who plundered stray travellers or levied black-mail on the regular merchants. In course of time, the number of the band increased, and the captain became more aspiring. Hamath-Zobah, or the citadel of Zobah, seems then to have become their headquarters. A stronghold, thus occupied by insurgents, threatened to become in the north what Ziklag in David's hands had formerly been in the south, a rallying-point for disaffection. Solomon saw the danger of leaving incipient rebellion to spread. Ordinary police arrangements were sufficient to check a band of desert robbers; but a city with bolts and bars, held by rebels, was a defiance demanding sharper handling. Solomon himself led the expedition against the place. If Rezon was the commander whom it was thus necessary to dislodge, his force could have made little stand against the might of the Hebrews. Perhaps it would melt

away to reappear again in the desert. The result of the expedition to Hamath-Zobah is told in few words: 'Solomon prevailed against it.' There was little or no glory in success, but the distant muttering of thunder had broken his kingdom's peace; the first drops of rain had fallen.

While the lustre of his reign was still undimmed by apostasy, Solomon received a visit from a princess called 'The Queen of Sheba.' Her name is not given; but several queens from Arabia are mentioned on the monuments of Assyria, as if the rule of princesses were common in that country:—Saamsi, queen of Aribu (*Arabia*); Yapaa, queen of Dihutani; and Bailu, queen of Ikhilu.<sup>1</sup> She had heard of the fame of Solomon 'concerning the name of the Lord.' Merchants and traders had clearly brought to her court the story of his magnificent buildings and his extraordinary wisdom. Grand though his buildings were, we cannot regard them as superior in solidity or vastness of workmanship to those of Egypt; while they were inferior in number. If, as is probable, she were acquainted by report with the temples and pyramids of the Nile Valley, the buildings of Solomon could not have induced her to undertake a journey to Jerusalem. A nobler motive animated this woman. She came 'to commune with him of all that was in her heart.'<sup>2</sup> In the ancient world as well as in the modern, nobility of nature and the pursuit of knowledge have sometimes guided kings and queens in their movements and their policy. Statecraft has then played a secondary part to love of learning. The Queen of Sheba was one of this gifted band. She came from Arabia, as even the baggage camels of her 'very great train' clearly imply. She brought spices with her, and very much gold, and precious stones, things found in that

<sup>1</sup> *Records*, v. 52, iii. 106. Strabo, p. 768, gives an account of the petty states of Arabia, and the many days' journeyings of its merchants.

<sup>2</sup> An English writer says of Solomon, 'The noysing of him to be the Messias was the cause (as some imagine) the Queene of Sheba tooke so long a jorney to visite him.'

peninsula itself, or imported into it from abroad. She was a child in knowledge, as may be gathered from the sights of Jerusalem, which gave her the highest delight. The dark sayings<sup>1</sup> with which she came to try the king, were not likely to prove difficulties to him, however puzzling they might seem to her. At least, he solved them to her satisfaction. No specimen of them has been preserved by either historian; but both of them record her astonishment at 'the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord.' The admiration, excited by these lesser details of household arrangements, reveals the womanly bent of her mind, and conveys a measure of her intelligence. Probably also to her admiration we are indebted for the record, which has been preserved, of the daily provision made for the royal table. Whether the document was drawn up to satisfy the Queen of Sheba's curiosity, or was merely extracted from a clerk of the kitchen's book, regulating the supplies sent by the royal purveyors, it is worthy of a closer inspection.

'Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts and roebucks and fallow deer and fatted fowl.' There were thus ninety quarters of wheat provided for each day.<sup>2</sup> But, according to the measure of a man's eating given in the book of Exodus, an omer of manna was sufficient supply for a day. There were one hundred of these in the Hebrew Cor, which was about the same as an English quarter. Ninety quarters of wheat thus contained a day's food for nine

<sup>1</sup> Prov. i. 6: 'The words of the wise and their dark sayings.' The word for 'dark sayings' occurs only once in the Kings and in the Proverbs.

<sup>2</sup> 'The hart and the roebuck and the fallow deer (1 Kings iv. 23) are mentioned in the same order in Deut. xiv. 5, and the latter word occurs nowhere else in the Bible.'—Colenso, Part vii. 21.

thousand people. The oxen, sheep, fowl, and game would supply at least as many more. If, then, the inmates of Solomon's palace be set down at twenty thousand, the number cannot be thought too high. If men, women, and children be counted, it was probably higher. But the arrangement of the table excited admiration as much as the food provided. The great Hall, as the house of the forest of Lebanon seems to have been, may have also served as a dining-room for state festivities. 'All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold; and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold.' By placing the two sets of vessels together, the historian may have wished to convey an idea of similarity of use. The magnificent hall also was well adapted to touch the fancy of the stranger queen, if she were there entertained to state banquets. But when she saw royal princes and ministers of state each taking his proper place in the banqueting-room, while the gorgeous banner of the kingdom floated over her own head (Song ii. 4); when she saw pages attired in cupbearers' dresses waiting on the king, and guards with the golden shields, which were kept in the Hall, standing in the background, and a host of servants attending to the wants of the guests, the effect was such as the king may have intended to produce, 'There was no more spirit in her.' At one of these grand banquets she appears to have made a little speech, eulogizing the wisdom of her entertainer, extolling the happiness of his people, and blessing Jehovah for the gift of so glorious a king. Before returning to her own land, she gave Solomon one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in greater store than he ever knew afterwards, and precious stones. The Queen of Sheba's visit presented the same features for a historian's pen to record as royal visits have always done since her time. Perhaps the prominence given to her love of knowledge redeems the story from the vulgarity of grand dressing and costly eating and drinking, with which the records of royal progresses usually

abound. The relations which subsisted among crowned heads in the ancient world before and after Solomon's reign, were similar to the relations which exist among them in modern times. Pharaoh visited Jerusalem as Solomon's friend and father-in-law, perhaps twenty or thirty years before. A queen of Arabia, and Khita-Sir, the prince of the Hittite land, paid visits of friendship to Rameses the Great, about the time of Moses. Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, went to meet the Emperor of Assyria at Damascus, while his grandson Manasseh, with other kings, met the successor of that emperor in Syria, or paid homage to him in Nineveh. Zedekiah also visited his conqueror in Babylon, seven years before the rebellion which brought ruin on his kingdom. Ancient records, only recovered in our own day, abound with these royal visits of friendship or homage. Thus, the wider the view we take, the more lifelike becomes the sacred history.

The visit of the Queen of Sheba probably took place late in Solomon's reign; for a slight indication of time seems to be conveyed in the words, 'There came no more [not again] such abundance of spices as those which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.' Her country was not so inaccessible as to be beyond the reach of his merchants and seamen. Nor would a gift once given by her be refused as an article of commerce, when asked from her by his own servants, in the king's name and for the king's use. Other matters were engaging Solomon's thoughts. Troubles were rising around him; the shadow was deepening across his faith and his greatness.

Although the daughter of Pharaoh was the queen or chief wife of Solomon, she was neither his first nor his favourite wife. Two years before he became king, he had been married to an Ammonitess called Naamah (*Pleasant*), whom the Greek translators, by an easy guess, imagine to have been Hanun's daughter. There was nothing in the Hebrew law to bar the marriage; and experience gave David no cause to



apprehend danger from an alliance of the same kind as Nehemiah, five centuries later, had good cause to condemn. And was not David himself sprung from Ruth, a Moabitess, and one of the most honoured women in his country's annals? But Naamah was not destined to be another Ruth, grafted on the family tree of Jesse. Her son, Rehoboam, was born before David's death. Nor were Naamah and Pharaoh's daughter the only wives of Solomon. They were two out of an army of women, through whom the king was lured on to ruin. Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines crowded the palace. Apparently, however, most of them occupied an inferior position; for in the inner circle there were only 'threescore queens and fourscore concubines,' while the rest are described as 'virgins without number' (Song vi. 8).

The change from wisdom to folly in Solomon's life may have been so gradual as to have at first escaped the notice of the old men who surrounded his throne. When it was too manifest to be longer hid, it had probably attained a strength which bore down opposition. One thing seems clear. His son and successor, Rehoboam, rejected the counsel of these advisers. He made a show of asking their advice, as his father may have done in his presence. Rehoboam received it, only to treat their opinions as he may have seen Solomon do when their words were unpleasant. From the action of the son in the gravest crisis of a kingdom's history, we may infer the action of the father when wise counsellors crossed his imperious wishes. These men had lost the power to control their master. Princesses from all quarters were gradually received into his palace as wives of the king. 'Solomon loved many strange women,' it is said, a description of his wives borrowed perhaps from his own book of Proverbs and from Deuteronomy. Some of this host of women he was forbidden to marry by the law of the land. But a man who wishes to explain a law away when a breach of it suits his

purpose, has no difficulty in finding reasons, especially if he be a king with whom all things have gone well. Such was Solomon's case. He had prospered and been magnificent in everything hitherto; he was resolved to be magnificent also in the army of princesses whom he maintained in his palace. Purposes of state may have led to this resolution. When an Assyrian king conquered a city or a nation, he sometimes related, in his story of the war, the taking of its king's daughters to his own palace as wives or concubines. Solomon may have regarded the daughters of tributary kings or chiefs in a similar light: ties of union, it may be, between their fathers' thrones and his; pledges of loyalty and goodwill. A policy so short-sighted ought not to have deceived one who passed for the wisest of men. But it explains the enormous number of women in his palace from 'the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites.' No palace, however large, could keep the tale of women, gathered together by Solomon, from quarrelling with each other, from fanning the embers of their neighbours' quarrels into flame, from planning crime, and from executing terrible deeds of villany or vengeance. But the king, whose song on the power of genuine love is surpassed by no human composition, could not have been deceived into a belief of the worthiness or sincerity of the homage paid to him by these female slaves (Song viii. 6, 7):

'Set me as a signet ring upon thine heart,  
 As a signet ring upon thine arm :  
 For strong as death is love ;  
 Inexorable as the grave is jealousy ;  
 The flames thereof are flames of fire ;  
 A most vehement flame.  
 Mighty waters cannot quench love,  
 And floods cannot drown it.  
 If a man would give  
 All the wealth of his house for love—  
 He would utterly be contemned.'

David's palace was the scene of frequent misery from the passions which vexed its inmates. Much more would

Solomon's be found a home of wickedness, of envious rivalry, and of sorrow; for no hand, however strong, and no man, however wise, could preserve law and order among a thousand women, all striving for the only object of their existence, the favour of one master to whom they were all slaves. By breaking the laws of nature and of common sense, the king laid himself open to the whips and scorpions which outraged humanity keeps in store for its defiers. Amid a babel of discordant voices, and conflicting or dangerous passions, not even Solomon could retain a reputation for wisdom. The means which have since been invented by savages for maintaining order in a palace full of female slaves had not then been invented. Every woman among them would fight for her own hand, without dreading the bowstring of her master, or the sack into which she might be thrust and hurried off to end her battles in the neighbouring Dead Sea.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there reason to ascribe even to Solomon the employment in his court of eunuch guards, such as existed in later times. The only passage which casts a shadow of doubt on this view is 1 Sam. viii. 15, where a word occurs which is sometimes found afterwards with this meaning.

The consequences of this parade and sensuality were soon apparent. The worship which these women were accustomed to in their father's houses, they adhered to in their master's palace. An enforced seclusion made superstition strike deeper roots into their hearts. Far from being lifted higher by their wise lord, these ignorant slaves dragged him down to their own level. Ashtoreth, Milcom, and Chemosh were honoured in Solomon's house. He knew it; he ceased to fight against it; he yielded to his wives, and fell away from the truth. But he did more than wink at their forbidden wor-

<sup>1</sup> 'There are said to be a very large number of inmates in the Imperial harem [of Morocco], many of them female relations of the late Sultan Sidi Mohammed; but without including these, there are about five hundred ladies at the Sultan's disposal, and the number is being constantly added to.'—*Daily News*, 'The British Mission to Morocco,' May 11, 1882.

ship. On the range of hills known in later times as the Mount of Olives, but called in his day 'the hill that is east of Jerusalem,' he built a high place, which may mean chapels or temples as well as altars, for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Moloch, the king, the abomination<sup>1</sup> of Ammon. Ashtoreth, the Venus of Tyre, was equally honoured. He does not appear to have sacrificed to these vanities himself, but he gratified his women by allowing them to burn incense and to sacrifice to their gods. Nor were these the only idols adored in the palace and countenanced by the king. He did the same 'for all his strange wives.' Jerusalem was overrun with idolatry. From the slopes of Olivet idolaters could look down on the altar and courts of Jehovah. Solomon had given false gods a place in 'front of Jerusalem;' he had flouted his folly in the very sight of Jehovah. The ground disgraced by these heathen altars was afterwards called 'the Mount of The Destroyer [Corruption].' Thrice only is the word previously found in history; once when it expresses the Destroyer, who passed through Egypt on the passover night; again when it denotes the Destroyer, who went out from the Philistine camp to spoil the homesteads of Israel in the war of independence;<sup>2</sup> and next when it denotes the Destroyer, who smote seventy thousand men in the end of David's reign. Solomon is described in that one word as introducing among his people a destroyer, causing more terrible ruin than the Passover angel or the Philistine plunderers, or the Destroyer's sword over Mount Moriah. Seldom is one word found to describe so truly the consequences of a king's policy. As the high places were on the right hand or south of the Destroyer's hill, they were probably at a lower level than the temple enclosure, or out of sight of it altogether. Charity

<sup>1</sup> This word is unusual; it is taken from Deut. xxix. 17.

<sup>2</sup> It occurs only other four times, thrice in Jeremiah, and once in Ezekiel. The Septuagint Greek misses the whole force of the word by an unintelligible rendering. Evidently the Hebrew manuscript used for it was worthless: '*the hill Moshath*,' it says, 2 Kings xxiii. 13. *Mashchith* is the word.

towards fallen greatness would induce every reader of the story to entertain this hope. But ‘the Lord was angry with’<sup>1</sup> Solomon. The old men, who had been Solomon’s advisers in his days of greatness—the sons of Nathan and Zadok and others—cannot have regarded these proceedings without alarm. Some of them must have remonstrated with the king on his folly. But their remonstrances were uttered in vain. One man, however, did not remonstrate: he threatened judgment on madness so incredible. David’s sins had been personal, and had been punished in his own house and family. Solomon’s sins were regal, and were avenged in his regal power. A prophet brought him the sentence passed by Jehovah. Ahijah, the Shilonite, was probably the messenger: ‘I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.’ What Samuel said to King Saul nearly a century before, this successor of Samuel says, in almost the same words, to the successor of Saul: ‘The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and given it to a neighbour of thine.’ The prophets and historians of Israel repeated the words of their predecessors, just as the events of Israel’s history are seen repeating themselves in warning, in threatening, and in fact.

The position of women among the Hebrews seems to have undergone a change after the days of Solomon. It could scarcely have been otherwise. No king can familiarize his people with the sight of a thousand slave wives in his palace, without striking a fatal blow at woman’s influence in every home throughout his dominions. Previous to Solomon’s reign, the names of women renowned for greatness were common among the Hebrews. For four centuries the nation’s annals had been full of them—Miriam, Deborah, Jephthah’s daughter, Hannah, Manoah’s wife, Naomi, Ruth, Michal, Abigail, the wise women of Tekoa and Abel. But for four centuries after Solomon’s death only two women are renowned for any good

<sup>1</sup> The words are a quotation from Deut. ix. 8.

and great work, Huldah the prophetess, and Jehosheba, the wife of the priest Jehoiada. The Shunamite woman was a shining example of private worth ; while Maachah, Absalom's granddaughter, and Athaliah, Jehoram's widow, were outstanding proofs of the degeneracy of women in their day. Of Solomon's sins this blow at woman's power in the world was not one of the least. 'He built God a temple,' says an old writer, 'but I could wish he had not let the temple of his heart to fall to ruine. There were not more workmen about the building of the one, than there were foule sinnes busie in destroying of the other ; his heart went downe farre faster than the temple rose, as if God had meant successively in one patterne to have drawne to the life the best of his graces, the worst of our sins.'

This apostasy of Solomon, and this disregard of prophetic warnings, may seem incomprehensible to us. But the world in his days went on as the world does in our own. As conscience warns in our time and warns in vain, so prophets warned in Solomon's time and warned in vain. And precisely as the voice of conscience is now drowned by the noise and bustle of life, so was the prophet's voice drowned then by cares of state and the business of pleasure. We cannot stop the mouth of conscience ; no more could Solomon seal the lips of a prophet. But he could act as we act ; he could turn away his eyes, and become absorbed in things that were more pleasant, though of infinitely less moment. Amid the ten thousand distractions of a day, the prophet's voice was only one. If his message was delivered in presence of other people, as it would be, the opposition which it excited in the king's breast would steel him into a defiant attitude towards the messenger. A sneer or a sarcasm would be the witty reply to Ahijah, on whom he dared not lay his hand, as he would have laid it on Jeroboam. And it is notorious that, in all history, warnings, however wise, have been given in vain to men whose pride or whose wickedness had forced them

down from a high level of wisdom and good sense to incredible foolishness and imprudence. The prophet's chief functions were to expound and to enforce the Mosaic law. Sometimes he sided with the people against the king; sometimes he upheld the king's authority against the people. As the safety of the nation lay in obeying the divine law, the prophet represented the national conscience, which recognised the right, even while the people followed the wrong. But Solomon could claim as thorough a knowledge of that law as any prophet. He could also imagine or say that the messenger who came to him mistook his own ideas for the ideas of heaven. He could call him a bigot or a fanatic. Men do this, or something similar, in modern times, when a tender conscience upbraids or threatens. But conscience ceases to upbraid or threaten when it loses its tenderness. In the same way Solomon ceased to regard a prophet's warning, when he accustomed himself to treat his words and his own fears with doubts or scoffs. The difference between his day and ours lies more in the names used than in facts.

The threatening of the prophet speedily began to bear fruit. A generation before, Joab had so wasted Edom, that there was no hope of its people ever again asserting their freedom. The race of Esau seemed to be rooted out. But it survived to pay back into Israel's bosom the horrors of his six months' occupation of the land, and to make the conqueror's descendants say, 'Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.' Among those who escaped from Joab's impolitic slaughter was a band of men who had been in immediate attendance upon the king. When their master fell, and all hope of their country was lost, they fled to Midian, carrying with them a child of the king, called Adad or Hadad. The desert of Midian, though not far from Elath, furnished a safe retreat for the fugitives in its inaccessible fastnesses. As time passed, hope began to dawn on them. Changes took

place in Egypt, which broke the tie between Solomon and its king. Pharaoh's daughter in Jerusalem was dead, or was counted an enemy by the reigning house in Egypt. The Edomite fugitives, taking advantage of the time, found their way to Paran, and from that place were guided or recommended to the court of Egypt. Hadad was received with favour. Pharaoh assigned to him a house, rights of purveyance and an estate. He gave him also in marriage the sister of Tahpenes, his own queen. And Genubath, the son whom she bare to Hadad, was brought up by Tahpenes herself among the sons of Pharaoh. The Edomite colony prospered in Egypt. It was gathering strength for an effort to recover its own land. Women of its race were among those who ruled the king in Jerusalem, and were weakening his hands. More true to their own people than to their lord, they probably kept their countrymen in Egypt aware of the discontent that was abroad, the want of military chiefs like David or Joab, and the chance that was at hand of regaining the country, which a former generation of their people had lost. When Hadad, believing the time ripe, requested leave to return to the rocks and deserts of Edom, Pharaoh expressed his surprise. 'What hast thou lacked with me?' he asked. The black land of Egypt, with its countless delights, seemed preferable to the brown sands and scattered oases of Edom, with their hardships and danger. But a lover of fatherland sighs for the heath or the desert amid the plenty of a smiling paradise. 'Nothing,' was Hadad's answer, 'howbeit let me go in any wise.' The hornets of the south were let loose on Solomon.

But disaster was befalling his arms in the north also. The marauding band of Rezon became an army, which despised the soldiers trained by Solomon. Inured to hardship and adventure, they repeated in the north of Palestine the policy pursued by David long before in the south. But they were more favoured by circumstances than he. Saul had a general skilled in war, and able to cope with the best soldiers of the



time. Solomon had no general worthy of naming in the history. His father's mighties were all dead, or had become feeble old men. A reign of peace, of magnificence, and latterly of women, had raised up no men of ability to take their place. With as much ease as David shifted his quarters from the desert of Ziklag to the town of Hebron, did Rezon pass from the Syrian wastes to the greenery of Damascus. One of the brightest jewels in the Hebrew crown was, it may truly be said, plucked out of it for ever. The Hebrew garrisons of Damascus and the neighbouring fortresses probably shared the fate of the six hundred archers, left by the Emperor Aurelian to hold Tadmor after he conquered its queen, Zenobia, in 273 A.D.: they were massacred.

Civil discord was the only ingredient wanting to fill the cup of Solomon's misery to the brim. It came, as it usually does, in unexpected fashion. When the king was fortifying Millo, and strengthening the unfinished walls of Jerusalem, he became suspicious of a young man called Jeroboam, whom he had made 'ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.' The fortifications were in some way connected with this office. Nor is it difficult to discover the relation between the two. Although the word translated 'charge' does not occur elsewhere in the Kings, it was clearly a technical word for 'the burden' borne by Joseph's family, that is, apparently, by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. They provided men and material for the work. He was no untried or unknown young man whom the king chose for this office. He was seen to be industrious; but other qualities recommended him to the king. His mother was a widow called Zeruah; he was an Ephrathite, and belonged to the town or village of Zereda. Of the site of Zereda there is at present no certain knowledge, although conjecture places it a few miles to the west of Bethel. If this conjecture be correct, Jeroboam, like Saul, was a Benjamite. But he is called an Ephrathite, which means either a native of Bethlehem or an

inhabitant of Mount Ephraim. At the beginning of his reign Solomon's throne was assailed by Joab, an Ephrathite, the son of a woman, evidently a widow, called Zeruiah; at the close of it, his throne is attacked by Jeroboam an Ephrathite, the son of a widow, Zeruiah. Whatever Jeroboam's lineage or birthplace may have been, his office put him in communication with the nobles and people of Ephraim. He had much in his power if he wished to lighten the labour or the taxes of both. And he appears to have gained their esteem, while he continued also to preserve his master's confidence. About the time when Solomon received the prophet's message, warning him of the dismemberment of the kingdom, Jeroboam was met by Ahijah on a road outside of Jerusalem. The two were alone in the open country. One of them had dressed himself in a new garment. Ahijah's mind was full of the new departure before the nation, if, indeed, he had not come from delivering his message of judgment to the king. Belonging to the tribe of Ephraim himself, he was well known to Jeroboam. Seizing the new garment, Ahijah rent it in twelve pieces. 'Take thee ten pieces,' he said. Jeroboam obeyed, knowing well there was a meaning in the prophet's act. 'I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon,' he added, speaking in Jehovah's name, 'and will give ten tribes to thee. . . . I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes.' Although the two were alone in the field, the story of the rending of the garment got abroad. It was carried to Solomon. But Jeroboam, without waiting for the purposes of Jehovah to ripen, seems to have been over-eager to gather unripe fruit. He took advantage of his position to foment discord among the people; he put himself forward as a leader of those who were disaffected to the government. But he showed his willingness to strike before he had the power. He even appears to have attempted a rising, for 'he lifted up his hand against the king.' It was too soon. Compelled to flee for his life, he found refuge in

Egypt. Shishak, who was then Pharaoh, protected him during the rest of Solomon's reign, and was probably made aware of the treasures of Jerusalem, which he afterwards carried away.

Jeroboam's rash attempt was followed by serious consequences. He resided for some years at a court with whose idols and worship he became familiar. He witnessed also in the Nile Valley a civilisation which, in some of its material aspects, was perhaps superior to that of his native country. And the literature and science of the priests of Egypt were fitted to impress him with a higher idea of their knowledge and refinement, than he had formed of Hebrew priests and Levites. Policy ruled religion in Egypt. Religion ought to have ruled policy in Israel. But this cardinal principle of Hebrew faith was lost sight of by Jeroboam. He saw policy triumphant on the banks of the Nile. For ages the Egyptian plan had filled the Nile Valley with men, with wealth of all things, with the spoils of a conquered world. His own country's plan told a different story—defeat, disunion, and dishonour. He resolved to transfer the Egyptian plan to Israel, if ever he got the chance. Had he not fled to Egypt, this fatal lesson of short-sighted statecraft might never have been learned. But his residence in that country was the turning-point of a career, which Ahijah expected to prove a page of brightness in Israel's annals. It was the first step to ruin. He accepted the half of the prophet's message which suited his own ambition; he forgot the half which seemed dangerous to his political views. To become king was pleasant; but to follow in David's footsteps, and to worship in the one temple at Jerusalem, as he was warned to do, were commands which it appeared safer and was more agreeable to forget (1 Kings xi. 32, 38).

Although Solomon's reign lasted forty years, he was only about sixty at his death. The promise, 'I will lengthen thy days,' was not fulfilled, because the condition attached to it was not kept. Never was a brighter morning of life followed

by a sadder sunset. Generals of tried ability and statesmen of wide experience maintained the dignity of the crown in his early years. At his death he had no generals to lean on, or to recommend his successor to; while his counsellors were discredited by the policy which had brought the kingdom to ruin, and which, if they did not support, they were powerless to prevent. Wealth, wisdom, resources of all kinds, had blessed the commencement of his reign. Utter failure of every plan and of every hope darkened its close. Solomon received a mighty empire from his father; he bequeathed to his son a tottering throne, a kingdom crumbling away at the extremities and assailed at the heart. The causes of this complete failure in administration are not difficult of discovery. One word sums them up in the thoughts of the historian. That word is apostasy. But beneath it lie hid a number of other causes, all of which paved the way to Solomon's great transgression.

The magnificence of the king was purchased by heavy sacrifices from his subjects. Splendour in the palace was paid for by squalor in the cottage. Poverty had invaded the land, while a stream of wealth flowed into the king's coffers, and spread its influence in his immediate neighbourhood, till silver was nothing accounted of in Jerusalem, and cedar had become as common as the sycamores or fig-mulberries, which grew in numbers on the coast plain,<sup>1</sup> and furnished the poorer classes with a useful fruit. But the richest districts of the country told a different tale. A province in the fertile region of Galilee, north-east of Carmel, containing twenty cities, was given as a fief to Hiram, king of Tyre. When the Tyrian went to view the gift, he begged his friend to take the cities back: 'they pleased him not.' 'What cities are these, which thou hast given me, my brother?' he asked of Solomon. We can hardly be wrong in attributing his disappointment to the meanness of their appearance. And the narrative reads as if

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings x. 27. The Shephelah is mentioned here only in the book.

he gave Solomon six score talents of gold to take the cities off his hands. A pastoral people, devoted to their farms and their cattle, have always battled fiercely for freedom. But when the Hebrews won that battle, they had only escaped from the burdens, which wars of independence and conquest entailed on them under David, to the heavier burdens which the peaceful days of his son brought in their train. A large army required to be maintained both at home and in the conquered provinces abroad. The farmers of Israel had to find the men for this force from their own families. It was work without pay. Damascus, Tadmor, Zobah, Rabbath-Ammon, and Selah were fortresses which the nature of the people in their neighbourhood, or the necessity of protecting trade routes, compelled Solomon to hold with a firm hand. And the fortifications of the pass of Beth-horon reveal to us the danger that was still apprehended from the Philistines, or along that highway of nations east and west; the region required large garrisons. A force of nearly 300,000 men seems to have been embodied for these purposes. This tax in men was a grievous burden on the Hebrews. Not only were the soldiers without pay, while their farms were tilled by others; but they provided themselves with food, and probably with arms, out of their own means. Plundering of the conquered people must, in consequence, have been common; a bitter feeling of hatred between the rulers and the ruled would be the result. But the Hebrew soldiers should have been following the plough and tending the flocks at home; and the want of them was felt on many a farm. A further tax was laid on the landowners of the nation. By orders from the court, slaves were exacted to do the king's work. In the reign of Menahem (760 B.C.), there were 60,000 farmers in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, each wealthy enough to contribute 50 shekels (about £7) to the tax imposed by Assyria. If the tribute exacted by Solomon were slave-labour, about thirty thousand landowners must have contributed one

slave each, a heavy tax on the land. Rights of purveyance also were claimed for the court, which farmers might resent, but to which they were compelled to yield. A king's messenger was an officer unknown to their fathers, whom they had learned to know too well. When to these unusual burdens are added the charges on property exigible by the ancient laws, tithes for Levites and perhaps for the king, firstlings, first-fruits, and other dues, the farmers of Israel will be found to have had good cause for complaining of their heavy burdens.

The trade of the country appears to have been entirely in the king's hands. Even vineyards were let out by him at high rents. One of them at Baal-hamon was farmed by keepers, each of whom paid a thousand shekels for the fruit. Merchants also were probably authorized by the king, on payment of a fixed rate, to conduct the business of exchange throughout the land. We cannot, in the absence of more definite information, fully understand the working of this system. If it was the same as the selling by the English kings of a right to do business in certain articles of commerce, the iniquity of the arrangement would be worse in Israel than it ever was in England. A Hebrew farmer derived large profits from selling his grain, his cattle, his wool, his wine, and his oil to his neighbours in Tyre. But these profits would be greatly reduced if, instead of selling his wares in the open market, he was compelled by the king's arbitrary decree to sell them to certain merchants, who had purchased rights of trade, or who acted as middlemen between the king and the farmer. Monopolies are implied in the words which describe the profits got by the king: 'the gold that he had of the merchantmen and of the traffick of the spice merchants.'<sup>1</sup> The word used for merchantmen was well known to the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings x. 15. The word for 'traffick' occurs nowhere else in Scripture. In no other passage of the Kings are 'merchantmen' and 'spice merchants' found; but the Song of Songs sheds some light on the words: 'With myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant' (iii. 6; see also i. 10, 11).

king, and indicates those who went about the country on business, or who conducted the trade with other nations. Solomon was too needful of money not to keep a firm grasp on profits of every kind. Every olive tree, every vine, and every palm was a source of income in Israel, as every date palm is in the Sahara to this day. But when a farmer could not dispose of the fruit except to the king's merchant, his hopes of trade and profit were ruined. Middlemen, coming between prince and people, could be trusted to make sure of even larger profits for themselves than they secured for him. A fair and a free market was refused to the Hebrew people. A state of things had arisen, unknown to their fathers. Millions were toiling for the profit of one man. Millions were suffering privations to build up that one man's name for magnificence, and to enrich the few who were gathering for him the fruits of a nation's industry. Both he and these few, according to Hebrew law, should have toiled for the millions of the people. A system so baneful could only result in the hardening of that one man's heart to every generous feeling, and in the growth in it of a belief in his right to consult at all times his own selfish ends. How different he had become from those better days when, looking on himself as an emblem of a far greater King of Peace, he wrote: 'He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper; He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy; He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in His sight' (Ps. lxxii. 12-14). All this was changed. But there was another source of income to the king which must have been specially galling to the people: 'the gold from the governors of the land.' As this is joined with 'gold from all the kings of Arabia,' there is no doubt of the meaning. In the latter case it means tribute; in the former, the product of taxes. But Hebrew farmers could not be expected to raise money for the king without a weight of

hardship pressing them down, which the men of our age can scarcely realize. Coined money may have been current in the country. Many things warrant this belief. But other hints and references lead to an opposite conclusion. Rings of gold and silver—the money which was current in Egypt—probably passed from hand to hand in the interchanges of trade. But it was certainly scarce, and would be hoarded then, as certainly as coin is hoarded in that country to-day. To give it up to the tax-gatherer of Solomon would be as great an act of self-denial in a Hebrew farmer, as in the fellahin of Palestine to surrender their coined money at the bidding of a Turkish pasha. For the farmers recognised no right in the king to exact money in any shape. All taxes were imposed in kind, not in silver or gold, except in one or two instances of rare occurrence. To demand gold from the farmers, that the governors of each province might forward, perhaps, only part of the sum demanded to Jerusalem, was a filling up of the cup of their oppression to the brim. A tax of six or seven pounds sterling was the standard measure of a wealthy man in Israel three centuries afterwards: the same sum, charged on twice the number of wealthy men who were found in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes at that time, would only have supplied Solomon with a hundred talents of gold.

The root of bitterness from which nearly all these wrongs had sprung was the king's disregard of the divine law. Had he acted up to the statutes binding on him as a ruler, his people never could have been oppressed as they were. He was commanded to think of himself as one of them. He was forbidden to let his heart be lifted up 'above his brethren.' But he broke this law. He allowed his thoughts and ways to soar far 'above his brethren.' Losing sympathy with them, he soon lost reverence for the Overlord of all men, Jehovah Himself. If the outlay on his palace, with its women, its servants, its delights, and its vanities, was no greater than that on the palace of the Sultan of Turkey not



ten years ago, four hundred talents of gold would have been required annually in money or in kind. Probably the cost was much greater. But as soon as the stream of gold began to flow in these channels, there was no hope of diminishing its volume. A broader and a deeper stream would be demanded year by year. Disregard of law in the palace led to tyranny in every province. Cause and effect were closely joined together in Solomon's fall. Ill-treatment of his brethren preceded ; disregard of Jehovah followed. Slowly but surely the end came, apostasy from the faith and the breaking up of the kingdom. The brightness of poetic genius, with its keen love of nature's sights and sounds, as evidenced in the Song of Songs, could not save king or kingdom. Philosophic reflection on the vanity of all things, and especially of a ceaseless round of pleasure, was equally unavailing. By failing to obey the great law of doing good to all men, he soon failed to do good to himself. But that law of the Hebrew faith could not be broken without entailing a departure, which ever grew greater, from the law of God. And so the end came to Solomon in the sorrow and in the shame of apostasy from the faith. Three centuries and a half after his death, while his greatness and his wisdom were still acknowledged, a memorial of the ruin caused by his apostasy is seen in the name given to the mount 'on the east of Jerusalem,' which, from his time downward, had been polluted with the worst forms of heathenism—'The Destroyer's Hill!' Whether he repented of the wrong he did is a question which has greatly exercised the minds of those, who are not content to let the curtain hide what Providence has allowed it to fall on. 'If this move not,' said an English preacher more than two centuries ago, 'yet let God's promise be of some credit, which was made so firme for Solomon, "I will be his Father, he shall be my Sonne: if he commit iniquitie, I will chasten him with the rod of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away

before thee." Mark the words, "If he commit iniquity, He would chasten him;" but how? With the rod of men. But where in the Scripture is the rod of men taken for damnation? "He would take His mercy from him;" but how? Not as he did from Saul that was a reprobate; why therefore Solomon a reprobate?'

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PRIESTS AND LEVITES.

THE strongly-marked distinction, within the tribe of Levi, between the priests, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, the rest of the sons of Levi, is generally believed to have been instituted by Moses in the wilderness, and maintained amid all changes down to the overthrow of the Jewish state by the Romans, a period of fifteen centuries. When, however, the distinction was observed to be seldom or never put forward, so as to be beyond reasonable doubt, from the beginning of Deuteronomy to the end of the book of Kings, while the prophets generally are equally silent, doubts arose, which soon took the shape of a theory, and at last claimed to be ascertained facts. Should they turn out to be well-founded, the whole complexion of the history from the wilderness wanderings to the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem, an interval of one thousand years, must undergo a change. Briefly stated, the case for the theory stands thus: ‘Everywhere throughout the middle books of the Pentateuch the distinction between priests and Levites has the force of law, and Aaron appears as high priest (Ezra vii. 5) in the meaning of that word after the Exile. The priests are called sons of Aaron, a title which occurs nowhere in the other Scriptures till the Exile, and which is unknown even to Ezekiel, who calls the priests in the temple of Jerusalem, whom he contrasts with the rest of the Levites, sons of Zadok. . . . Of a difference in rank between priests and Levites Deuteronomy knows nothing: every priest must be a Levite, belonging to the race of Levi; every Levite may be a priest, so far as he discharges priestly duties.’ On this showing, it

follows that the book of Deuteronomy, in which for the first time occurs the peculiar phrase, *the priests the Levites*, belongs to an earlier period of the history than most parts of the middle books of the Pentateuch—Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. An interval of seven centuries is believed to separate the former from the days of Moses (700 B.C.), while the latter make their appearance for the first time two centuries and a half later still (450 B.C.). The reality of the whole history of the Hebrew monarchy turns on the settlement of this one point. While the temple of Solomon stood, it is believed to have been under the charge of the Levites, every one of whom was a priest. There was no difference of orders within the tribe. A difference of rank existed, for there was a high priest, a second priest, and ancients or elders. While this is the state of things said to be recorded in the books of Kings, and discovered in the older prophets, the Chronicler presents a view of these officials, which, it is said, existed in his own day, but was unknown before the Babylonian exile. He blundered through ignorance, or he romanced through simplicity. This is one view of the question in dispute. An older and more generally-received view regards the distinction between priests and Levites as having been obscured, during the monarchy, by the unfaithful conduct of the Levites. They are known to have forsaken their duties in the second temple. They forsook them also under the first. Before the captivity they aspired to be priests, although the law ordained them only to be priests' assistants. The priests, on the other hand, remained faithfully at their posts in the first temple. They thus came to be separated in popular thought and popular speech from their assistant Levites. Reading the history in Kings and the sermons of the prophets, in which the popular speech was reflected, we see something like a divorce between their statements and those of the Pentateuch. The new theory has given expression to this feeling.

We shall therefore examine the theory with more care than

the evidence, hitherto adduced in its support, may seem to merit. By detecting weakness or blundering in its statement, a deeper insight may be got into the history of the nation. And at the outset, Graf speaks so unadvisedly as to damage his whole view of the priestly laws. 'Everywhere,' he says, 'throughout the middle books of the Pentateuch, the distinction between priests and Levites has the force of law.' The middle books referred to are Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. But the distinction does not exist, and is nowhere referred to in the first two, Exodus and Leviticus. It is found certainly in three or four chapters of the book of Numbers. A more unguarded statement could not, therefore, have been made, or one showing less acquaintance with the minute points on which the history in these three books turns. Even the word 'priests' in the plural occurs but twice in Numbers (Num. iii. 3, x. 8); *the priests the Levites* never at all. But had these books followed, instead of preceding Deuteronomy, *the priests the Levites* is a phrase which would have been copied by the writer of them, if for no other purpose than to give the books an air of antiquity. There is a reason for speaking of Aaron *the priest* in Exodus and Leviticus, and for calling his sons *the priests*. There is also a reason for going farther to draw, in Numbers, a broad distinction between priests and Levites. And there is a reason, too, for changing the form of speech in Deuteronomy, when Aaron was dead, to *the priest*, or *the priest and his sons*, or *the priests the Levites*. All these reasons can be given and their value weighed. But if the three middle books were far later in time than Deuteronomy, and if, as was obviously the case, their teaching was intended to support the teaching of Deuteronomy, it is not according to the analogy of things for the writer or writers of them to pass over in silence the strangely unusual phrase, *the priests the Levites*. No attempt is made by defenders of the new theory to explain this silence. Until it be explained, it stands forth as a witness against their view. The phrase was

known to the writer or writers of these middle books ; it was caught up by some one who is believed at a late date to have written parts of the book of Joshua (Josh. iii. 3, viii. 33) ; it was also caught up by Jeremiah and Ezekiel ; why was it not also copied by still later writers, who are thought to have written most of the three books ?

In Numbers only does the distinction between priests and Levites make its appearance. There was a good reason for this. Throughout the whole of the book of Leviticus, the chief figures on the scene, if we leave Moses out of account, are Aaron and his sons and the Levites generally. But not a word is said of the relation between Aaron and his sons on the one hand, and the Levites on the other. The former were the priests ; the latter were the priests' assistants. But in Leviticus, Aaron and his sons are said to ' keep the charge of the (tabernacle of the) Lord,' the very phrase which expresses the office of the Levites ; and nowhere in the book is there the slightest reference to the service, and charge, and duty of the Levites as the priests' assistants in watching and carrying the tabernacle, the altars, the ark, the furnishings. Again and again mention is made of dues and revenues belonging to the Levites as a tribe, but never of the duties of their service about the tabernacle. Only in the book of Numbers are these duties and this charge clearly stated ; for they originate from, or at least they hang on an event entirely different from the legislation in Leviticus. They are directly connected with the numbering of the people, which took place after the tabernacle was set up, after the priests were appointed to their office, and after the legislation in the book of Leviticus. Such is the story given in the Pentateuch itself. It hangs well together, and it could not have been the work of an editor or of a forger.

A compiler writing the book of Leviticus would have arranged matters somewhat differently. Especially would this have been the case had he lived and written after the destruction of Solomon's temple. Knowing that it was his

intention in the novel—for so we must call it—which he was composing, to assign the Levites as assistants to the priests, he could not have kept this knowledge to himself throughout the book of Leviticus. A word would have escaped him here, and another there, betraying his purpose, and letting future men see into the deceit he was practising. It is vain to say he would have guarded against this leakage of thought. No other novelist in any age of the world has succeeded in thus safeguarding himself from the critic's keen eye; and there is not the slightest ground for believing that the writer out, or the deviser of these details of Hebrew worship would have been able to avoid the many pitfalls, which beset the man who pretends to speak and write as if he had been alive a thousand years before he was born. Nothing but the truth of the story can explain the want of references throughout Leviticus to the service and charge of the Levites about the tabernacle. They are first recorded as having assisted the priests in the book of Numbers (see above, p. 114). They did not put the tabernacle together, when the story of its first setting up is told in the last chapter of Exodus. Their services were required only when it had to be taken down, and conveyed from place to place. The necessity for their help was therefore not felt, till the camp was ordered to set forward on the march to Canaan. This stage of the history is reached when we come to the early chapters of the book of Numbers. The intervening legislation in Leviticus is thus seen to be in its proper place. A coincidence at once satisfactory and unmis-takeable is discovered, which effectually disposes of the many 'probabilities' figuring in books like Bleek's *Introduction*, and giving a show of discernment to what is really a proof of unwillingness or inability to follow the guidance of facts.

We have next to examine the evidence which is believed to prove that *the priests the Levites* meant, not the sons of Aaron, but every member of the tribe of Levi. The challenging of witnesses is here unprecedented. For the books of Exodus,

Leviticus, Numbers, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah are refused a hearing on this great question. They give evidence, it seems, which is not to be relied on, or, if the truth must be told, which is absolutely false. Every Levite previous to the Babylonian captivity was a priest, it is said. But these books affirm that only the sons of Aaron were priests, and that the rest of the Levites were their helpers in holy things from the days of the wilderness wanderings onward. In other words, the testimony of 350 pages out of 1392 in the Hebrew Bible, or more than one-fourth part, is declared unworthy of credit. And if the historical books alone be considered, the meaning of this is, that more than one-half of their pages gives a representation of the case which is pronounced utterly untrue. Be this as it may, their evidence is refused. Since, therefore, they cannot be called as witnesses, we must be content, in conducting this plea, to cite writers whose testimony no one rejects. We are not afraid to yield thus much; for what remains of the Old Testament furnishes enough to prove the untenableness of the position maintained by those, who have thus denied the trustworthiness of one-half of the history. At the same time, their way of conducting the case is peculiar. They silence the witnesses, and then say no evidence is forthcoming.

If, then, we take the recognised evidence,—that is to say, the evidence which all are willing to accept,—we find that the word *Levite* occurs in<sup>1</sup>

*Deuteronomy* 12 times, of which 8 clearly mean *the priests*.

*Joshua* 14 „ „ 2 „ „

*Judges* 10 „

<sup>1</sup> The word *priest* or *priests* is of much more frequent occurrence. On a rough estimate, it is found in

Exodus	11 times.	Judges	15 times.
Leviticus	190 „	Samuel	40 „
Numbers	69 „	Kings	74 „
Deuteronomy	14 „	Isaiah	6 „
Joshua	36 „	Jeremiah	46 „



<i>Samuel</i>	2 times
<i>Kings</i>	1 time
<i>Isaiah</i>	1 „
<i>Jeremiah</i>	3 times (xxxiii. 18, 21, 22).
<i>Ezekiel</i>	8 „ (xliii. 19, xlv. 10, 15, xlv. 5, xlviii. 11, 12, 13, 22).

The testimony of Joshua, when the book evidently draws a distinction between the priests the Levites and the rest of the tribe, is refused as unworthy of credit. We shall not call that witness. Of twelve passages in Deuteronomy which are of uncertain meaning, we shall speak in good time. The ten passages in which the word occurs in Judges prove nothing in this debate. There remain, then, the following from the Old Testament, to which, for the sake both of clearness and of contrast, we shall add those in the New Testament and the first book of the Maccabees—

1 Sam. vi. 15.	Isa. lxvi. 21.	John i. 19.
2 Sam. xv. 24.	Ezek. xlv. 10, xlv. 5, xlviii. 13, etc.	Acts iv. 36.
1 Kings viii. 4 (xii. 31).	Luke x. 32.	1 Macc. (nowhere).

From the evidence furnished by the New Testament and the Maccabees, it is clear that no doubt should arise regarding the reality of this distinction, even although it is seldom or never met with in the history of a period. No one could infer its nature from the cursory mention of the words, priests and Levites, in the New Testament. In the book of Maccabees, Levite never occurs. When, therefore, we find that it occurs twice in the book of Samuel, once in the Kings, and once in Isaiah, we have no right to be surprised. Our duty is to discover the meaning of the word. But that cannot be ascertained from the two passages in Samuel. While one man, with good reason, might hold, as Graf holds, that it denotes a priest a Levite, another, with equally good reason, might say that it denotes a Levite an assistant to the priest. All hope of deciding the matter by an appeal to that evidence must be given up. But this silence of ancient writers regarding a

thing which was perfectly well known to them is not unusual. Take a parallel case from the greatest historian of ancient Greece, Thucydides. 'On the general state of society in Greece, on her science, art, and literature, he affords no information whatever. Not a word of the splendour of her public monuments, the brilliancy of her dramatic representations, the marvels of her sculpture and painting. In so far as Thucydides is concerned, we should never have known that such men as Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, or Aristophanes, as Phidias, Anaxagoras, Gorgias, or Socrates ever existed. Yet with all these the historian was contemporaneous.'<sup>1</sup> Such, then, is the value of an argument from silence—a value enhanced by the fact that the history of Thucydides contains more writing and covers vastly less time than Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings put together.

The witnesses for or against the distinction between priests and Levites in those early times are now reduced to three. Of these witnesses, the earliest is the Prophet Isaiah, and his evidence is most distinct: 'I will also take of them for priests for Levites, saith the Lord' (Isa. lxvi. 21). The interpretation of that verse is of no moment here. We are concerned only with the fact that it places the priests in one class and the Levites in another, for that is the meaning forced on a reader by the grammar of the passage. But it is also a little singular that, instead of writing *for priests and Levites*, the prophet, leaving out the *and*, wrote *for priests for Levites*. Other examples of this omission occur in the same chapter.<sup>2</sup> The evidence here seems to be beyond dispute. But it is refused. The witness, it is said, was not Isaiah, the prophet who lived in Hezekiah's reign (700 B.C.). He was another man altogether, who lived after the burning of the temple by the Chaldeans, and before the return of the exiles from Babylon. However, it is not allowable to dismiss a

<sup>1</sup> Mure, *History of Grecian Literature*, v. 74.

<sup>2</sup> See the Hebrew, Isa. lxvi. 19, 23; also lxiii. 11.

witness in this fashion, for in the chapter from which we have quoted his evidence, he speaks of sacrifices proceeding, of the temple as standing, of 'the voice of noise from the city,' and of idolatrous customs prevailing among the people. Whoever rejects his testimony, has more to do than merely assert that he lived long after Isaiah, the prophet of Hezekiah's court. But the passage is of some value even on their view. It shows clearly that the distinction between priests and Levites was well known about or before 540 B.C. It had therefore been much more ancient. A fact so destructive of the theory, and so plainly deducible from its defenders' views, must be resisted. Accordingly, it is denied that *for priests for Levites* means *for priests and for Levites*. But this refusal of the *and* cannot bear arguing. Its rejection is asserted by Bishop Colenso, and passed from as speedily as possible. Clearly the passage tells against the theory.

But the second witness, though later in time, is still more explicit in point of fact. Ezekiel was a priest as well as a prophet. If not a minister in the temple built by Solomon, he was intimately acquainted with all its arrangements; and nothing can be clearer than the distinction drawn by him between the two orders of temple servants: 'The Levites over against the border of the priests,' for so the words run in the Hebrew, 'shall have five-and-twenty thousand in length' (xlvi. 13). And in the preceding context he gives a historical view of the conduct of the two orders in the maintenance of the temple worship: 'The sons of Zadok, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray' (xlvi. 11). The priests remained faithful; the Levites did not. While the former remained at their post, the latter did not, but had to be brought back to their duties when they were required. Ezekiel, in thus writing, was speaking of the temple as it had been for ages, not of the temple which should be after his time. His evidence is therefore decisive. But it, too, is so cavilled at

that we shall return to his statements afterwards. And here it has to be remarked that a case in criticism, like a case in law, commonly turns on the evidence of only one or two good witnesses. Of direct, unmistakeable proof in debated matters there is usually a scarcity. Secondary or indirect evidence brings out the truth more frequently than we might be disposed to admit. But in this case, from a field of evidence unduly restricted, we have already got two unexceptionable witnesses. We shall now produce a third, so clear that there is no way of getting rid of him but by denying that he ever spoke at all:

1 KINGS viii. 4.

They brought up the ark of the Lord and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, and them the priests and the Levites brought up.

2 CHRON. v. 5.

They brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle; them the priests the Levites brought up.

The distinction between the priests and the Levites, in the verse quoted from the book of Kings, is too manifest for any attempt to be made to deny its existence in the passage as now read. The writer of Solomon's reign in the book of Kings repeatedly lets fall a word or a phrase, which would be unintelligible if the Book of the Law had not been lying before him. 'Priests and Levites' in his pages is therefore not a form of words standing by itself in singularity; it is one of several, all equally singular, which, taken together, form a peculiar feature in the writer's style of thought and expression. But it is unwarrantable to tear away that phrase from the rest of the passage in which it occurs. It is embedded in a context full of meaning. Once only in the fifteen lines of the story does the word *Levite* occur; but *priest* occurs five times. So long as the writer describes the carrying of the ark and the going into the temple—purely priestly duties—he speaks of priests only: 'The priests took up the ark;' 'the priests brought in the ark unto his place;' 'the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud.' But when

he associates the ark with 'all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle,' he adds, 'even those did the priests and the Levites bring up.' Levites, as distinguished from priests, had charge of the holy vessels when conveyed from place to place. We see, therefore, not only that the narrative is in strictest agreement with the Mosaic law, but also that the duties described and the context put it out of a reader's power to affirm a corruption of the text here.

By many writers it is felt that the testimony of this passage must at all hazards be put out of the way. Their books would, in a great measure, be labour lost, if the little word *and*, a single letter in the Hebrew, were allowed to hold its place; for it speaks with a voice of power which drowns the loudest talk of learning or criticism. Kuenen and others regard it as an insertion in accordance with the later law, forgetful all the while of the writer's peculiar method, and of the evidence against them from the context of the passage. As a valid reason for their view, they point to the Chronicles, which gives the passage without an *and*. Some have not the boldness to call it an insertion by an unauthorized hand; they only say 'it appears' to be such. But weak though this way of getting out of a difficulty be, it becomes weaker still when the usage of the Chronicler is looked at. Generally he writes *the priests and the Levites*; but he sometimes inverts the words, the Levites and the priests. Sometimes he leaves the connecting *and* out altogether: 'The priests, the Levites, and the Nethinim,' '*the priests the Levites*' (1 Chron. ix. 2; 2 Chron. xxiii. 18, xxx. 27). Nor is the word *and* the only change made by the writer of Chronicles on the passage from the book of Kings, if we suppose him to have borrowed from that source. He has left out 'Jehovah' after 'ark,' and has added the article *the* before it; while he has left out *and* a second time in this passage before *them*. Here are four changes made in the one verse, changes sufficient to destroy all confidence in the value of the con-

clusion, drawn from the omission of *and* between *the priests the Levites*. Nor are these the only slight changes made on the section in which this verse occurs. So numerous are they, that no one, at all acquainted with the laws of criticism, will give heed to the inference drawn from the words of the Chronicler. And with this conclusion Bishop Colenso agrees. He cannot see his way to striking out the word *and* in the book of Kings, that the words may run, *the priests the Levites*. All the versions have the connecting particle:<sup>1</sup> therefore he refuses to remove one word or one letter while he retains the rest of the verse. He considers it to be 'most probable' that the reading in Chronicles is wrong as well as the reading in Kings. Both of them he holds to be insertions by some writer, who had also a hand in drawing up the middle books of the Pentateuch long after the destruction of Solomon's temple. If his premises are allowed, this conclusion is in accordance with sound reasoning. And as if to confirm the view given above, the Chronicler himself had already shown, as clearly as words could convey his meaning, what he intended in this passage; for, writing of the same thing thirty pages before, he says: 'The priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark' from Kirjath to Zion (1 Chron. xv. 4, 14). This witness, then, has stood cross-examination. The point in dispute is certainly small, but the smallest things are often hinges on which the greatest things turn. The witness has not broken down, and when the whole of his evidence is looked at, it will be found, as we have seen above, to go far in proof of the case.

The evidence from the book of Deuteronomy remains to be examined. According to Graf, whose views are now followed by several in this country: 'Of a difference in rank between priests and Levites, Deuteronomy knows nothing. Every priest requires to be of the tribe of Levi; and every Levite may be a priest, so far as he discharges priestly duties.' To

<sup>1</sup> This is incorrect. See the LXX. (Vatican), 1 Kings viii. 3, 4.

support this theory of the teaching of that book, direct statements are felt to be wanting. *The priests the Levites* is a common phrase, which means, what every one allows, that the priests were Levites; or which may mean, as it does elsewhere, the priests and the Levites. But the book of Deuteronomy never inverts the phrase, as is done in the Chronicles, and once in Jeremiah, *the Levites the priests*. In Graf's view, the one form is as likely to be found as the other. But the inverted form is unknown in Deuteronomy, while 'the priests, the sons of Levi,' is an alternative phrase. Other evidence is therefore sought for to supply the want of direct statements. It is found mainly in the difference between the revenue assigned to the children of Levi in that law-book, and the revenue assigned to them in the books of Leviticus and Numbers. These revenues are said to be so unlike in the two cases, that it is impossible the books can be the work of the same law-giver, or have been written in the same age. The word Levite, the duties and the revenues of the tribe, are thus all dragged into the inquiry. In Deuteronomy there are eight places about which no doubt is entertained that the word Levite means priest. We may therefore set them aside. But there are about a dozen other passages, in which it is not so easy to say what the meaning of the word is. Among these doubtful texts, therefore, evidence for or against the distinction must be sought. In one of them the whole tribe of Levi is seen to be set apart for three purposes—(1) 'to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord; (2) to stand before the Lord to minister unto Him; and (3) to bless in His name' (Deut. x. 8). It is not said, and there is no reason for thinking it is implied in the passage, that these duties fell indiscriminately to any members of the tribe who chose to offer their services, or believed themselves more fit than others for the work. Evidently arrangements are understood to have been made, which it did not come within the aim of the book fully to describe. Of the three duties assigned to the Levites, the

second: 'To stand before the Lord, and to minister unto Him,' does not always denote priesthood proper. Hezekiah applies the phrase to Levites as well as priests: 'He brought in the priests and the Levites, and said unto them, . . . My sons, be not now negligent; for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that ye should minister unto Him, and burn incense.' The priestly duty of burning incense is mentioned here, because, by a common use of language, it was a duty which belonged to the tribe, though exercised by only a part of its members. But it is small censure to call the statement we are reviewing incorrect. As in other cases, where a little trouble would have prevented such blundering, so it is here, for the phrase, 'to stand before Jehovah and to minister unto Him,' is found only four times altogether, twice when it refers to the priests (Deut. xvii. 12, xviii. 5), and twice when it refers to the Levites (Deut. x. 8; 2 Chron. xxix. 11) as a tribe.

It appears, then, that the phrase, which is thought 'invariably to denote the priesthood proper,' is really common to the whole tribe of Levi. A remarkable omission in the passage which describes the three duties of the tribe, is the priests' special duty to burn incense; priests only could stand before the golden altar within the holy place. This priestly duty figures in the earliest parts of the history in the life of Samuel, and must therefore have been well known at the time when Deuteronomy is thought to have been written. But the writer carefully avoids including it among the duties of the tribe. And he had a reason for his silence, which is perfectly evident to all who believe in the reality of the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, but must be inexplicable to those who regard every Levite as a priest. The tenth chapter of his book describes the duties of the tribe of Levi; the beginning of the eleventh gives the doom of those incense-burners, who usurped this outstanding duty of the priests proper. And Korah was a Levite.



The priests have a title of office given them in the book of Deuteronomy which became peculiarly their own: 'The priests the Levites, bearers of the ark of the covenant.' A title of office so distinct as *priests the Levites*, implies that there were others *not priests*, but possessing claims to the honour; and in the same way, *Levites bearers of the ark* seems to imply that there were *Levites not bearers of the ark*. The phrase, *the priests the Levites*, may have originated in the Korah rebellion, and may be in direct opposition to the scheme of *the priests the first-borns*, which that rising of the men of renown in the camp attempted to establish on its ancient foundation. Apparently the title, *bearers of the ark*, became restricted to the priestly family, though the duty does not seem to have been so restricted at first. On this latter point, however, there is room for doubt. From the arrangements originally made, it seems as if the bearers of the ark were to be not the priests, sons of Aaron, but the Kohathites, sons of Levi.<sup>1</sup> However, the following verses indicate feelings of fear and hesitation among the Kohathites about the service laid on them. A new rule was therefore given: 'Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden.' Manifestly, the Kohathite Levites shrank from bearing the ark 'that they might live and not die;' if so, the priests then took the duty on themselves. Those ark-bearers lived, like a king's guard, at the place which had been chosen for the central altar. Their office and duties made this attendance necessary. But they formed only a part of the population at the central sanctuary—a fact which is made clear by the principal passage bearing on the subject in the book of Deuteronomy. It will repay an attentive study.

According to an ancient division of the Hebrew Bible, the section referred to falls under three heads—or, properly, it is divided into a general preface and two special paragraphs—thus:

<sup>1</sup> Num. iv. 4-15. Ver. 15 decides nothing. Our translators added *it* without authority, when the sense required *them*, that is, *holy things*.

*General Preface, Deut. XVIII.*

1. The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel : they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and his inheritance (Num. xviii. 10).

2. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren : the Lord is their inheritance, as He hath said unto them (Josh. xviii. 7).

§ 1. *The Priest and his Sons.*

3. And this shall be the priest's [priests' *Hebrew*] due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep ; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

4. The first-fruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

5. For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for ever.

§ 2. *The Levite and his Brethren.*

6. And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose :

7. Then he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the Lord.

8. They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

This is the great passage bearing on the point in dispute. At the beginning of the discussion a statement of the view, which seems most natural and lifelike, may impart clearness to the following remarks. Evidently, then, the general preface (vers. 1, 2) contains the revenues common to the whole tribe, briefly stated—the Lord's fire-offerings and His inheritance. Of the former it may be said that the book of Leviticus assigns them to the priests only. Part of them it does so assign ; but another, perhaps a principal part of them, is shared between priests proper and assistant Levites—a tenth of the flock and the herd (Josh. xiii. 14). By 'his inheritance' is clearly meant a tithe of the produce of the land. But the first special section shows that the priests had sources of revenue not shared in by the assistant Levites. These are called the priest's due and the first-fruits. According to Leviticus, the latter belonged to the priests only (Lev. xxiii. 9-12 ; Num. xviii. 8-13). But the Levites had no special dues

apart from their share of 'fire-offerings and his inheritance.' Certain arrangements had to be made for their support in special cases, and for guarding their proprietary rights. All these points are attended to in the second special paragraph.

There were Levites residing at a distance from the sanctuary. So widely spread should these members of the tribe be, that, according to the passage already quoted, they might come from any of the cities out of all Israel. A wanderer, arriving at the chosen sanctuary, was at once admitted to the rights and duties of the sacred brotherhood—'to minister, as all his brethren, the Levites, those standing there before the Lord.' Here, then, we meet with a title of office. Literally rendered, it is: 'Levites, the standers before Jehovah.' This is a very different title from 'the Levites, bearers of the ark.' The former could be and was applied to the latter. But the latter never was applied to all the former. It will be remarked, also, that while the priests are mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the word is changed to priest immediately after, and the whole become *the priest and his sons* (xviii. 3, 5). We naturally think of the common phrase, *Aaron and his sons*, as the meaning. Aaron could not be mentioned, for he died some time previous to the writing of Deuteronomy. But it is plain enough that this was the sense put upon the passage by the Chronicler, when he is doing the next thing to quoting these words (1 Chron. xxiii. 13). There is a different way of speaking used as soon as the position of Levites is described. The Levite wanderer is to be placed on the same footing as 'all his brethren.' Again, therefore, are we face to face with two titles, which can scarcely be thought to apply to the same set of men; *the priest and his sons* in the one case, *the Levite and all his brethren* in the other (xviii. 5, 7).

But the closing words of the section bring before us a real difficulty in the passage, 'beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.' This is the rendering given by the

Greek translators. Probably it is as near the truth as we can now make it, if it be not the whole truth. Literally, the words seem to run, Portion as portion shall they eat, besides his sales on account of (*or* in respect of) the fathers. A Levite, leaving his own city with the intention of settling at the sanctuary, would have a house to sell and its belongings. Provision was made for that happening (Lev. xxv. 32-34). But no mention is made of this provision in the regulation laid down in Deuteronomy. The difficulty is that that book is in itself avowedly incomplete, a book written to guide the people to such knowledge of the law as would keep them within the bounds which it prescribed for the nation, but not written and never designed for the guidance of professional classes in the details and niceties of business. Men who might be disposed to deny to Levi any part in the inheritance beyond the offerings by fire, tithes, and first-fruits, would find themselves put out of court by this reservation of the Levites' right of sale. What that meant the book of Deuteronomy does not tell. But a reader is so manifestly referred to a more scientific statement of this right, contained elsewhere, that he is bound to search for the information withheld from him here. Of oral tradition in this respect we have no proof and no knowledge. But of written and full details respecting the Levites' right of sale, we have a record in the book of Leviticus.

The tribe of Levi, then, according to the brief and popular account of it in Deuteronomy, was thus divided :—

<p>‘ The priest and his sons ’              appointed          ‘ to stand and to minister ’<sup>1</sup>              at          ‘ the place which the Lord shall              choose,’              and to be ‘ Levites              bearers of the ark of the              covenant of the Lord.’</p>	<p>The Levite and his brethren              settled in          ‘ any of the gates out of all Israel,’              or appointed          ‘ to minister in the place which              the Lord shall choose.’                Called also          ‘ The standers before the Lord.’<sup>1</sup></p>
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<sup>1</sup> Of the technical or professional use of this word there are traces elsewhere :  
 ‘ And the Levites *stood* with the instruments of David, and the priests with the

But we are here in a region of technical words, the full and accurate value of which may have perished with the downfall of the profession which used them, when it ceased to exist 1800 years ago. Though their written law-book survived, there is a want about it which may cause the most cautious readers many a stumble. It has come down to us shorn of that mouth-to-mouth exposition, which one race of students always hands on to the following. When, therefore, we see the confidence with which holes are picked in the book, contradictions discovered, and errors exposed, we cannot help wondering, if these readers are not attributing to the dead and darkened wisdom of the past, what is owing to the blindness of the present. As a specimen of this triumphing over the stupidity of that extinct profession, we may quote the view taken by this school of a contradiction between the Levitical and Deuteronomic laws, which has been put forward as a strong point in favour of their theory: 'The priest's share of a sacrifice in Deuteronomy consists of inferior parts, the head and maw, which in Arabia are still the butcher's fee, and the shoulder, which is not the choicest joint. But in the Levitical law, the priest's part is the breast and the leg, which is the best part (1 Sam. ix. 24).'<sup>1</sup> This is a glaring contradiction—so glaring in its clearness as to satisfy the most sceptical, that it cannot be a contradiction at all. And something has already been said on the quoted sacrifice of Samuel (p. 23). It is accepted as a historical fact; the fact is also accepted of the leg, as they render the word, being by law or custom, which comes to the same thing, the priest's portion of a peace-offering. Now let Leviticus have preceded Samuel; then it is not credible that this glaring contradiction

trumpets' (2 Chron. xxx. 26). 'And they stood in their place, according to the law of Moses, the man of God' (2 Chron. xxx. 16). So also 2 Chron. xxxv. 5, 10.

<sup>1</sup> Graf, *G. B.* 50, 51. Colenso, part vi. 440. The quotation in the text is from Smith, *O. T.* p. 440.

between law and fact could have continued without attention being called to the difference by those, whose profession it was to administer the law and gather their tribe's revenues. But as a matter of far more importance—suppose it to have been written after Samuel; then no intelligent forger or parable-writer could have made the blunder of setting down in fiction what he must have known did not exist in fact, especially when he was most careful to cull from Samuel all the odd words and odd ideas he found, which could give a flavour of antiquity to his legislative novel. This we remark in passing; for, so far as truth is concerned, it is a matter of the smallest importance, though large enough to overturn the theory we are combating, just as a small flaw in an axle or a tire may unexpectedly upset a railway train at its highest speed.

The difficulty here stated is one of two, which are regarded by this school of critics as insurmountable objections to the early date of the Levitical law in the middle books of the Pentateuch. They cannot be called, though they are generally considered, conclusive proofs of its origin during the Babylonian exile. With the removal of these difficulties, if they can be removed, comes the downfall of two supporting pillars of that theory. But these critics are confident of the impregnable position given them by these difficulties: and there is 'absolute contradiction in the laws.' These are bold words. We shall first examine the laws themselves, and then fortify our conclusions by the evidence of two Jewish priests—one of whom saw sacrifices offered and gathered tithes while the second temple was standing. Seldom can the same concurrence of evidence now be got on minute points of ritual, misunderstood by us.

For the first difficulty, then, it is assumed that these two things are one and the same, the Lord's fire-offerings, and the priest's due from the sacrificer of a sacrifice. Thus:—

DEUT. xviii. 1.

All the tribe of Levi shall eat the fire-offerings of the Lord, and his inheritance.

LEV. vii. 30, 31, 32.

The breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and the right leg (shoulder) shall ye give unto the priest of the sacrifices of your peace-offerings.

DEUT. xviii. 3.

This shall be the priests' due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they [he] shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

A portion consisting of the breast and the right leg cannot be the same as a portion consisting of the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. But the passages quoted neither say nor insinuate that they are the same. Levi's portion, on the left-hand of the page, is said to be the Lord's fire-offerings, and his inheritance; on the right-hand, the *priest's due from the people* is the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. The whole tribe is spoken of in the former case; in the latter, one man—the priest—receives a legal due from one sacrificer of a sacrifice, whatever the meaning of these words may be. We are asked to believe these two things the same. But Jehovah's fire-offerings, whether in the singular or in the plural, are mentioned about sixty times in the books of Leviticus and Numbers; while never is there the slightest approach to calling them 'the priest's due from the people.' In all the rest of Scripture they are mentioned seven times; nor are they ever called 'the priest's due from the people.' With singular indifference to facts, which a slight knowledge of Hebrew is sufficient to bring clearly out, the 'priest's due from the people,' as given in this passage of Deuteronomy, is said to be the same as what the priest got from peace-offerings—the Lord's portion of fire-sacrifices. The priest's due was one thing; the Lord's portion was another. That much is clear.

The fire-offerings, then, are one thing; the priest's due from the sacrificer of a sacrifice is another. Whoever holds that they are the same has but this one passage on his side, and the custom of more than sixty places warning him not to be

so confident. According to Deuteronomy xii., the fire-offerings could only be made on the central altar in the place which the Lord should choose. There, and nowhere else, also were they to be eaten. But in that same law of the central altar permission is given to sacrifice in a different fashion. Most express commands are laid down for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings to be presented on the central altar, and there only. But then the law proceeds: 'Notwithstanding, thou mayest sacrifice and eat flesh in all thy gates,' and more fully afterwards: 'If the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to put His name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt sacrifice of thy herd and of thy flock which the Lord thy God hath given thee.' The priest's due from the sacrificer of a sacrifice is defined in the same way as this permitted sacrifice; 'whether ox or sheep' in the one law, and 'of thy herd and thy flock' in the other. There were thus two kinds of sacrifice—the priestly or atoning, allowable only on the central altar or 'before the Lord,' and the popular or festive, which could be presented anywhere. 'The fire-offerings of Jehovah' were the priest's portion of the former; 'the priest's due from the people' was his portion of the latter. As the sacrifices were of two kinds, so were the dues of the priests.

The explanation of the matter seems simple enough. By the word *sacrifice*, a Hebrew understood two different things, which we must keep distinct. On the one hand, it meant the sacred rite of offering victims to God on the altar, sprinkling their blood on its projecting knobs, and burning their flesh wholly or in part. We use the word in this sense. But when a Hebrew slew a bullock or a sheep for a feast or for home use, which was probably far from common, except in wealthy households, he used the same word; he sacrificed the ox or the sheep. 'Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee;' while at the institution of the feast the phrase was different: 'Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families,



and kill the passover.’<sup>1</sup> Hebrew law took cognisance of the mode of killing these animals for food as well as for sacrifice proper. ‘Ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water,’ this central altar law said in one place; and in another: ‘Be sure that thou eat not the blood; for the blood is the life, and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh: thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.’ Slaughtering of sheep and oxen for food thus became lifted up into a holy ordinance, round which religion threw a sacred shield. It was not a vulgar employment, fit only for coarse natures, as it got degraded into in later times. It was a religious duty—a work performed under the supervision of the most refined and most learned in the land. It became a solemn reminder of the sanctity of life even in the lower animals; for neither sheep nor ox could be slain without the symbol of its life being, as it were, most scrupulously rendered to the great Giver of that life.

It comes, then, to be an inquiry whether the altar’s share of fire-offerings—such as the wave breast and the right leg—were the same as the priest’s due from the sacrificer of a sacrifice,—the two cheeks, the maw, and the shoulder. Both were not exacted from the same offerer. And the difference between the two shares is so great, that the man draws too largely on our powers of faith, who expects us to think that the members of a learned profession, in the daily habit of exacting these shares, would not have seen and wondered at or rectified the blunder. It is simpler to say that we have blundered, perhaps in eagerness to find fault, than to lay blame on them. But to explain all the jots and tittles of that and other laws may not be in any one’s power at this hour in the world’s history. The marvel is, not that difficulties meet us in the way of interpreting these ancient books, but that the difficulties are so few in number and so inconsiderable in weight. ‘The priest’s due from the sacrificer of a sacrifice,’

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xvi. 5; Ex. xii. 21.

then, was a portion exacted, not when a victim was offered on the central altar, but when an animal was slaughtered anywhere for food. Nor did the priests require to be scattered throughout all the land to exact these dues. We know that they were not so scattered. But there were ways open to them in practical life, by which they could both secure their own rights and see to the observance of the law. On the other hand, one of Jehovah's fire-offerings consisted of the wave-breast and the shoulder, which fell to the priest when a peace-offering was sacrificed at the altar before the ark.

If this simple explanation of 'the priest's due' leave any doubt on a reader's mind, even that may be removed by the words of Josephus and Philo—words which might have warned critics that they were handling things which learned men, vastly better placed than we are to discover the truth, had well considered two thousand years ago. 'If any slay beasts at home for a private festival,' says Josephus, a Jewish priest,<sup>1</sup> 'but not for a religious one, they are obliged to bring the maw, and the cheek, and the right shoulder of the sacrifice to the priests.' Even in the age of Josephus, a victim slain for food was called a sacrifice, precisely according to the way of speaking in David's reign, and for centuries before. But in a previous book of his writings, the same unquestionable authority, speaking of thank- or peace-offerings, says: 'Then giving the breast and right shoulder to the priest, the offerers feast upon the remainder of the flesh for two days; and what remains they burn.' A most learned Jewish priest, living in the time of the Apostle Paul, has thus left it in writing that there is no collision between the law in Deuteronomy regulating 'the priest's due,' and the law in Leviticus regulating his 'portion' of a peace-offering. The two refer to different taxes paid to the same class of men. Going back now to the table on page 600, and looking at the income of the tribe of

<sup>1</sup> See *Ant.* IV. 4, 4, and compare *Ant.* III. 9, 2. See also Philo (Mangey's edition), II. p. 235, and note o.

Levi in the light of the knowledge we have got, we shall find it hard to avoid concluding from the passage there quoted that the priest was one person and the Levite another, just as the priest's due from the people was different from the fire-offerings of Jehovah. The distinction drawn by Josephus shows, that the mouth-to-mouth teaching of the priests, two thousand years ago, recognised no difficulty in two parts of the law-book, which have come to be regarded in our day as an 'absolute contradiction' of each other. But it is easier to throw Josephus overboard, than to convince the world of your ability to swim better than he in the great ocean of Hebrew ritual law. And fortunately Josephus of Jerusalem happens to be supported in his views by another distinguished Jewish priest, who wrote about the same time, Philo of Alexandria. Neither of these writers saw contradiction or opposition in the two parts of the law-book. Both of them are explaining plain things for strangers generally, not attempting to reconcile incompatible things in reply to an opponent. What they write flows naturally from the pen as the clear meaning of legal provisions, and shows no trace of a forced construction in the conscious presence of a difficulty. With two witnesses like these on the other side, Graf and his friends may be bowed out of court as having impugned a law which they failed to understand.

But it seems they have discovered another contradiction between two sets of laws bearing on the priestly incomes. 'In Deuteronomy,' they say, 'the tenth of all produce of the soil, and the firstlings of sheep and cattle, were consumed by the owner in a feast at the central altar; while in Leviticus the tenth includes the herd and the flock, as well as the fruits of the ground, and belongs to the Levites, who in turn pay the tenth to the priests.'<sup>1</sup> There is a confusion of thought here, caused by not attending to the manifest difference in the Hebrew between *a tenth* or *tithe* and *the tenth*. It is also worth observing that by *a tenth* of the herd or flock is meant

<sup>1</sup> Graf, *G. B.* 47-51. Colenso, Part vi. 389-396.

only a tenth of the year's calves, lambs, and kids. These are elementary points on which a good deal will be found to turn. The Deuteronomic law, then, does not prescribe one thing and the Levitical law another. The two laws speak not of *the tithe* as if there were only one, but of *a tithe*, though not necessarily of the same tithe. When a writer makes them speak of *the tithe*, he can easily convict them of speaking in contradictory terms of one and the same thing. Both Graf and Colenso, in the passages quoted above, fall into this mistake. While Leviticus speaks of what, for the sake of clearness, may be called *a first tithe*, Deuteronomy may be referring to what has been called *a second tithe*. We admit that, though this distinction was well known to the Jews, and was acted on two centuries before our era, some better ground for it must be got than their traditions. And the only better ground is the Hebrew text of the laws, to which we can appeal even as they did. Tradition may have preserved the right interpretation of the text for the three or four centuries, which elapsed between the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans and the first appearance in writing of the phrase *the second tithe*.<sup>1</sup> There is neither improbability nor impossibility in this. On the contrary, a guild of priests banished from Jerusalem, and taught to cherish the hope of a glorious return, would be likely to keep up the study of their law, and to secure its right understanding by more effectual means than oral teaching.

NUM. xviii. 21, 26.

I have given the children of Levi *a whole tenth* in Israel for an inheritance. . . . Speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel *the tithe* (not *tithes*) which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up of it an heave-offering for the Lord, *a tithe of the tithe*.

LEV. xxvii. 30.

*A whole tithe* of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's.

DEUT. xiv. 23.

Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose to put His name there, *a tithe* of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and firstlings (not necessarily *the firstlings*) of thy herd and thy flocks. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it (1 Sam. x. 3); or if the place be too far from thee; . . . then thou shalt turn (it) into money.

<sup>1</sup> In the Greek translation of Deut. xxvi. 12. See *Tobit* i. 6-8.

As soon as attention is paid to the right placing of the article in these cases, nearly all the darkness which seems to cover the subject, or to involve it in extremest perplexity, is cleared off. Not all of it, for we must also bear in mind that while both sets of laws were given to the Hebrews as a nation, the left-hand set was designed for the benefit of a learned class in the community, and the right-hand set for the guidance of the people at large. The working of these laws would thus become simple; there could be no clashing, and there is not the slightest ground for thinking there ever had been. By the law in Numbers, the Levites took *a whole tithe* of the produce of the land for their own tribe, and then set apart *a tithe* of this tithe for the priests in the shape of a heave-offering to Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> But while the Levites thus claimed and took their rightful inheritance, the people were commanded also to take *a tithe* of their produce for consumption by themselves, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow. As there are ten tenths in a whole, it was easy enough for *a whole tenth* to be assigned to the Levite, and *another whole tenth* to be reserved for private hospitality, either at home or at the central altar. How any difficulty could be made about a point so clear, and one so often discussed by scholars, still more how it could be made an engine of attack on the historical reality of the whole legislation, may well excite surprise. There is more cause for wonder at the extraordinary use to which this apparent clashing of laws has been put in these days, than at the apparent clashing itself. However carefully a law-book may be drawn up, there always will be points, which cannot be understood without referring back or forward to fuller or parallel state-

<sup>1</sup> It would be easy to pick holes in almost any history by following the method which finds favour with some critics. Josephus tells us in his *Life*: 'Nor, indeed, would I take those tithes, which were due to me as a priest, from those that brought them' (15). It may be objected that no mention is here made of Levites, who alone were entitled to estimate and supply the priest's tithe; and as little is said of the real value of that tithe—a tenth of the tithe actually taken by the Levites. We shall be having Josephus in suspicion too before long.

ments; it is a small thing to ask that this common courtesy be extended to ancient Hebrew law.

But there is a last point about the tithing which has still to be examined. We do not say it has been used for undermining the authority of the record, but it forms a substantial difficulty in the way of rightly understanding the subject. And here it is allowable to speculate for a little; no one in these days can pretend to accurate knowledge. The Deuteronomic law has the following: 'When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, the year of tithing, and hast given unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled' . . . (Deut. xxvi. 12; xiv. 28). And, 'At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth a (*or* the) whole tithe of thine increase, in that year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates.' It is not necessary to make this third-year tithing 'quite distinct' from the two tithes which we have already considered. We do not agree with this view, and by way of speculation, if not to clear the subject, we shall give reasons plain enough and perhaps convincing. We begin with objecting to what seems an unhappy rendering of the words which stand 'tithing all the tithes' in our version. The rendering ought to be, as the meaning is, 'When thou hast made an end of estimating<sup>1</sup> *a whole tithe* of thine increase in the third year, the year of *the tithe*.' We can now proceed with our speculations.

The making up of a tithe charge on the produce of the land has always been a source of disagreement. Probably it was so likewise with the Hebrew farmers and landholders. As they had also to make up a tithe of their flocks and herds for the Levites, the difficulty of doing so year by year would become greater. Since they gave firstlings and a tithe of their cattle,

<sup>1</sup> For *estimating* some may prefer *giving*, which makes no difference on the sense. The sign of the accusative, but not the definite article, stands before *whole*.

it is not said that they gave of their flocks and herds as they gave of their fruits—two tenths. Probably ‘a whole tenth of thine increase’ meant cattle as well as produce of the land,<sup>1</sup> and the tithe charge for both had to be made up in the third year. Of the principles on which they went we are wholly ignorant—how, for example, they reckoned the tithe of a flock in which the increase was under ten for each of three years running. But to call the third year ‘the tithe year’ may well suggest some of the grounds on which disputes would be likely to arise. Every seventh year was an unproductive year for the fields. There were thus only six productive years in seven. Now, nowhere in Deuteronomy, not even in Deut. xv. 1–6, do we find mention made of this year of rest for the land and of no return for the farmer. But the reference to it in this ‘tithe year’ seems undeniable. Twice every six or rather every seven years had the farmers and landholders to estimate their returns of produce from the land. Apparently, therefore, this law of ‘a tithe year’ presupposes the regulation which prescribed a year of rest to the land, that is, it presupposes Lev. xxv. 4. But apart from this altogether, the farmer would probably find the outlay of one year so running into another as to put an annual return out of his power. With corn and fruit the tithing might be comparatively easy. But if his sheep and cattle were few in number, it might require three years for the increase to reach to ten or twenty, so as to enable a tenth to be taken. The law, recognising these difficulties, said to the farmer, but not to the Levite, *Take an average of three years.* An accurate return of a man’s annual income in Britain is frequently so hard to make, that the law, recognising the hardship or the unfairness, allows the average of three years to be taken instead. On the same principle, Hebrew tithe law divided the six years’ period of

<sup>1</sup> This may seem to depend on the meaning of the Hebrew word for *increase*. It seems to refer to cattle as well as farm produce in Deut. xvi. 15; 2 Chron. xxxi. 5, 6.

returns from the land into two periods of three years each. What a farmer might be unable for any reason to do one year, he could do or rectify in the tithe year, with its reserve of right to balance all outstanding accounts of net yield from the land. Hence the distinctness of the law: 'When thou shalt completely finish the estimating of a whole tithe of thine increase in the third year.' Our translators have obscured the meaning on more points than one. By leaving out the word *in* before the third year, they seem to give the idea that it was the third year's tithe only which was spoken of. There is no reason for taking that meaning out of the passage, as has usually been done. And there is as little for saying that 'the tithe of the third year' is 'quite distinct' from the two tithes spoken of in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Indeed, 'the tithe of the third year' is a phrase for which there is no ground in the Hebrew, and which it requires some courage to defend as a matter of even good sense.

But we now come to a serious difference in our English version between the laws about firstlings, which is strongly insisted on as a proof of the irreconcilable divergence of the Deuteronomic law from the so-called Levitical. Unquestionably what the one law orders to be done, the other says or seems to say not to do. Give an ox's and a sheep's male firstling to the Levite, says the one code; but the other code says to the farmers, 'Eat (apparently) female firstlings yourselves before the central altar.' And the latter in one passage adds,<sup>1</sup> 'The firstling which shall be born in thy herd and in thy flock, every one, the male, thou shalt sanctify to the Lord thy God; thou shalt not do work with a firstling of thine ox, and thou shalt not shear a firstling of thy sheep.' The opposition between the laws in these two books is really slight. But instead of saying, if the one law be true, the other must be false; or if the former was given in one age, the latter must have been given farther down the stream of time, and as a

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xiii. 12, 15; Num. xviii. 14-18; Deut. xv. 19, xii. 6, 17; Neh. x. 36.



corrective to the evils incident to the previous law, more wisdom would have been shown in an endeavour to ascertain whether both laws may not be true, and have been in operation together for ages. Nor is this view so unreasonable as might be thought. For the firstlings regarded by the Levitical law are males, which the firstlings regarded by the Deuteronomic may not be. It is perfectly possible too, nay, it may be regarded as certain, that in many cases there would be a Levite's firstling and a farmer's also. And on this natural and well-known experience of cattle-breeders and sheep-masters the question may largely turn. No provision was made for giving the Levites the two or three firstlings which might be produced at a birth; and no care, however great, could enable a farmer to decide which of these two or three was to be called first-born, and which not. The number of these doubles and triplets in a single year in a temperate country, with the immense pasture grounds of Palestine, must have been very large<sup>1</sup>—‘a flock of sheep, whereof every one bears twins,’ says the Song of Songs, ‘and none is barren among them’ (iv. 2). But the farmer gave one, and one only, to the Levites. The other or the others were his, and yet they were not his. And here the law stepped in with gracious provision for the farmer's difficulty on the one hand, and for his just share of his own goods on the other. These extra firstlings, if we may call them so, were on no account to be bred for farm-work or for their wool. They must be sanctified to God, but not alienated from the farmer. To offer them as peace-offerings, to use them at the great feasts, and to give the needy a share of God's bounty, was a way out of the difficulty which satisfied all requirements. This the Deuteronomic law did, the Levitical law remaining intact. While the Levites knew their own share and their own duty from the latter, the farmers

<sup>1</sup> In Scotland, about sixty per cent. of ewes have doubles. In firstling births the percentage of doubles is not so great. Two calves to a cow, and two foals to a mare, are also not unknown in Scotland.

knew their share and their duty from the former. As a contribution to the poor and needy, this bestowal of part of the firstlings to satisfy their wants, especially at the three great feasts, would largely contribute to spread joy throughout the land.

The witness, chiefly relied on by Graf and his friends to support their view, is the Prophet Ezekiel, who has already been cited on the opposite side to prove the existence of the Levites as the priests' servants in Solomon's temple. Although he does not deny the distinction between the two orders, he is said to express sentiments with which it is incompatible. Because he never mentions the name of Aaron, nor calls the priests, of whom he was himself one, the sons of Aaron, he is assumed to have been ignorant of the history which made Aaron the father of all Hebrew priests. In other words, he had no knowledge of the law in the three middle books of the Pentateuch. But the silence of a writer on any point does not prove his ignorance of that point, or of its value. In the case before us, it only proves the omission of Aaron's name from the writings of Ezekiel. By the same method of reasoning, Moses may be proved to have been equally unknown to the prophet as the leader and lawgiver of the nation; for, though the coming forth from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings are repeatedly mentioned by him (ch. xx.), he no more names Moses than he does his brother Aaron. Silence, then, proves nothing on this point. But a satisfactory reason can be rendered for omitting Aaron's name.

In the last nine chapters of his book, Ezekiel is describing the restoration of the temple. But there were two things about the restoration on which reasonable doubts might be entertained. Once before, the temple had been destroyed. Shiloh, the place where it was built, had been laid waste, and sentence of desolation passed on the site. The temple was a second time destroyed; the temple hill of Zion had become a desolation, like Shiloh; the ark had been removed from the former,

as it had been from the latter, never again to be returned to its place. Seeing the close resemblance between the two desolations, a Hebrew would naturally ask, if Zion like Shiloh had incurred a perpetual curse? Would another holy house be built on Moriah, or had a new site to be sought for the restored temple, a new revelation to be waited for, and new prophets to arise? On these points not a doubt was allowed to rest. Samuel never visited Shiloh after its ruin, so far at least as is known to history. He is nowhere said to have predicted its restoration as the temple site. And he does not appear to have had any idea of the sacred hill which was destined to take its place. But Ezekiel, who was alive when the temple on Moriah was destroyed, predicted that the destruction was only for a season. Again should the temple be built on the same site; again should the solemn feasts be held within its restored courts. On these points the prophet speaks clearly in the chapters which immediately precede the concluding nine, and form an introduction to their detailed description of the new building.

But there was another point to be thought of for the restored temple on Moriah, as there had been when desolation befell Shiloh. A change of priesthood was threatened in the latter case. Eli was told that he and his family had forfeited the high priest's office. His father's house, it was said, had been chosen 'out of all the tribes of Israel' to be Jehovah's priest. But his right to the high priest's office rested on his house and the house of his father walking before God for ever. As the condition had not been fulfilled, forfeiture of the office was the result: it went to a faithful priest, who was to do 'according to all which is in Jehovah's heart and mind.' Evidently there was no change to be made in the priestly *tribe*. After, as well as before the desolation of Shiloh, Levi was the tribe from which the priests were chosen. Only a change of *family* was predicted to Eli. But Aaron's eminence was well known in Samuel's time; the part

he took in the deliverance from Egypt, and the advancement he received, are both mentioned (1 Sam. xii. 6). There seems, then, no reason for refusing the generally-received opinion that Eli's house was a branch of Aaron's wider family, and that another branch of the same parent stock would displace it from the office of the high-priesthood. Zadok's family is known to have succeeded to the office from which Eli's children were removed.

The mention of the Zadokites by Ezekiel is now clear. A change in the family which held the high-priesthood followed on the desolation of Shiloh. Eli's family lost or forfeited the office for the high treason of which they were guilty. Zadok's family succeeded, in consequence of their father's faithfulness. But desolation had befallen the temple, in which Zadok's family had long served on Moriah, precisely as desolation befell the Shiloh temple, in which Eli's family had served. Naturally the reasoning of people would be, As it fared with Eli's children, so will it fare with Zadok's. Forfeiture was the punishment of the former; forfeiture will also be the punishment of the other. But this was not to be. The sons of Zadok had not forfeited their high office in favour of another and a better branch of Aaron's family. Ezekiel predicts that the honour they gained in David's time they should continue to hold in the restored temple. As there was to be no change on the temple site, so there should be none in the family of the high priest. The parallel of Shiloh was not to hold in either case.

In their desire to draw the utmost support they can from Ezekiel's use of the word Zadokites, Graf and his friends are unjust towards the writer of Chronicles. 'Certainly,' says Graf, 'Abiathar is wholly ignored by the book of Chronicles, which, following 2 Sam. viii. 17, speaks of an Ahimelech, son of Abiathar (1 Chron. xviii. 16), and also introduces him next Zadok (1 Chron. xxiv. 3, 6, 31).' This is altogether wrong; for the writer of Chronicles not only names Abiathar, but

introduces him as the colleague of Zadok in the high-priesthood: 'David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests' (1 Chron. xv. 11).

To describe the priests of his day as 'the sons of Zadok' is therefore no proof that Ezekiel did not recognise, or was ignorant of, their more ancient designation as 'the sons of Aaron.' But the prophet makes this clearer by the reason which he gives for continuing to them the honour bestowed on their father in David's reign: 'The priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God' (Ezek. xliv. 15). For faithfulness to their charge, then, they were to be retained in the place of high honour they had well guarded for centuries. A higher place they could not attain to. Nothing more noble was possible for them than to keep, with Jehovah's approval, the position originally assigned to them. Not to have forfeited their rights was all that could be said. But it was different with 'the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity' (Ezek. xliv. 10). Manifestly these Levites were like Korah in the wilderness, 'seeking the priesthood also.' But their usurpation of the priest's office was punished, *first*, by a sharp reminder of the lower rank they hold; and, *second*, by a renewal of the wilderness exclusion of them from the priesthood. For the prophet proceeds: 'And<sup>1</sup> they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house. . . . And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place.' Misconduct on the part of the Levites in past ages made necessary a clear definition of their rank and duties in the new temple

<sup>1</sup> This word is translated 'yet' in the English, an evident mistake.

that was to be built. That definition was delivered by Ezekiel in words and phrases so startlingly the same as those of the law given in the wilderness, that, if he had not the Pentateuch before him as we now read it, it will be difficult to attain to certainty in any historical matter whatever. There is not a shadow of reason for attributing to Ezekiel the invention of these words and phrases. If Moses was not the first utterer of them, we are in hopeless uncertainty about a matter which otherwise seems clear as noonday. The Levites, said Ezekiel, 'shall not come near unto me to do the office of a priest unto me,' as they attempted to do for ages 'when Israel went astray.' But what are these words of the prophet save a copy, or a singularly clear echo, of those spoken in the wilderness: 'The censers of these sinners against their own souls' shall be 'a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense,' the peculiar duty of the priests in the holy place (Num. xvi. 38-40; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16).

There remains another historical coincidence to be pointed out in connection with these statements of Ezekiel. With a clearness which leaves nothing to be desired, he lets us understand that the priests remained at their post, 'in charge of my sanctuary,' 'when Israel went astray.' Although he is speaking of 'the sons of Zadok' as those whose relation to the high-priesthood specially singled them out for mention, it is clear from his writings that a part of the priestly family is here standing for the whole. They did not desert the temple, however much their rights and revenues may have been curtailed. But the same praise is not given to the Levites; 'they are gone away far from me.' They abandoned their posts precisely as their successors did in the days of Nehemiah, a century and more after Ezekiel's time. But there is historical evidence which confirms this forsaking of their duty by the Levites, 'when Israel went astray.' No mention whatever is made of their desertion in the book of Kings.

The first discovery of it is given by the Chronicler in narrating the overthrow of Athaliah. Jehoiada, the high priest, and a son of Zadok, is seen at his post as chief keeper of the temple during the dreary six years of her tyranny. But the Levites had fled: they required to be 'gathered out of all the cities of Judah;' and even after the priest had succeeded in his plans, the same Levites were coldly indifferent to the duty of repairing the neglected temple (2 Chron. xxiii. 2, xxiv. 5, 6). Read in the light of Ezekiel's prophecies, these statements of the Chronicler are a valuable and an undesigned proof of the historical value of his writings.

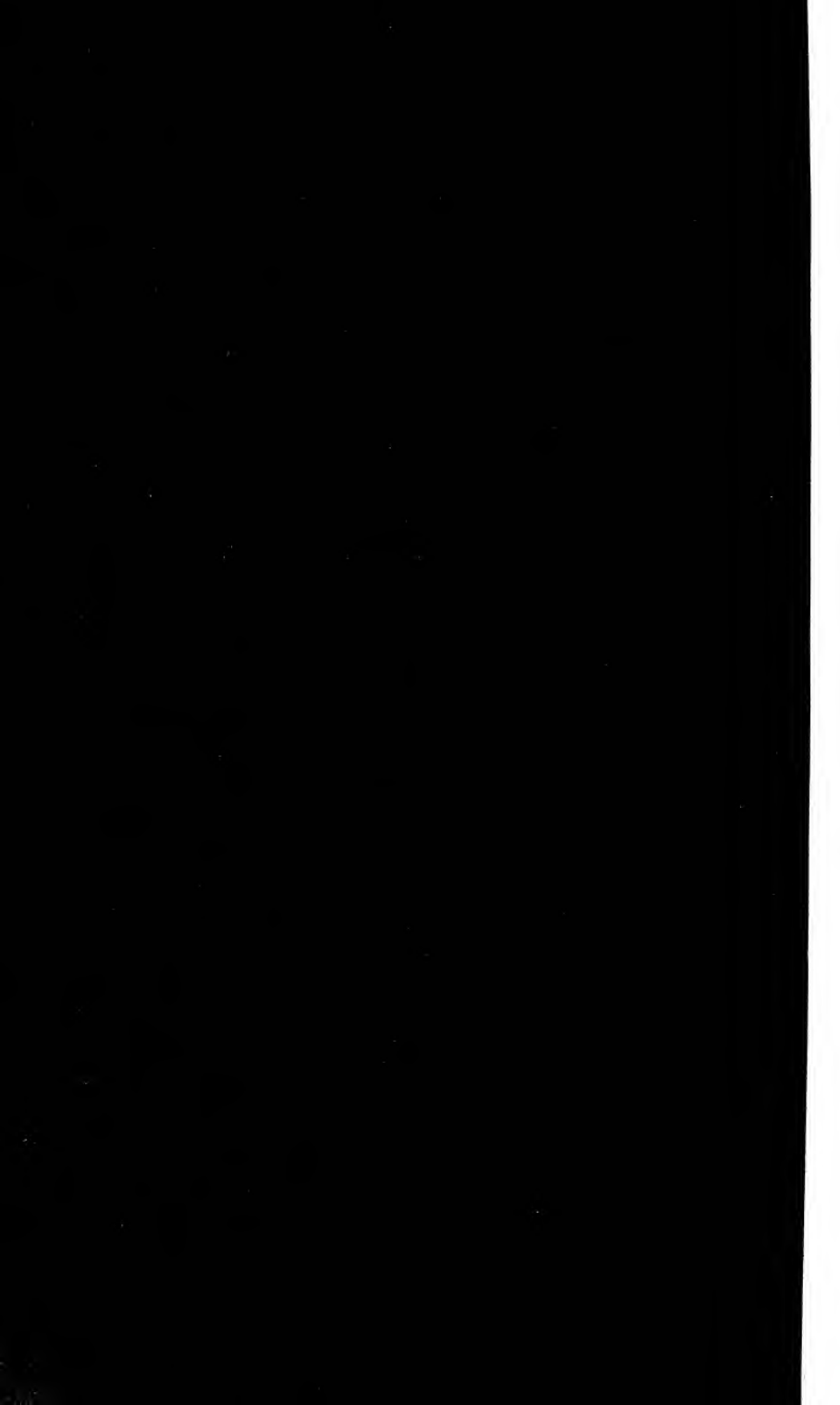














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